

All My Life

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All My Life

by [Overpowdered](#)

Summary

George was just living day by day unsatisfied with his life; it was just how things were. And then he met Dream, a young man alone and hurt in the woods. What was meant to be a kind gesture eventually turned into a surprising adventure for George. Dream wants George to come with him to help find his friend. What happens when this quest to find Dream's friend turns out to be the least of their problems? What if something even bigger is at stake?

Notes

Hey guys! So this is my first time posting a fic and I hope you like it. I am not for shipping George and Dream as real people, rather I like the idea of them if that makes any sense. If they ever express discomfort in having fics written about them then I will take this down of course.

Note that this is set in a **REALISTIC** Minecraft world in case anyone missed that. There are elements of Minecraft but with touches of realism that you wouldn't actually find in the game itself.

ENJOY!

Chapter 1

George woke up with a heavy feeling settled deep in his chest. He blinked up at his ceiling, confused. Nothing noteworthy has happened to wake up feeling this....unsettled. Yet he was.

He didn't remember having any nightmares or dreams of any kind that night. So then why did he wake up feeling like something big was going to happen today?

Sighing, he cast aside his blankets and stood out of his bed. There was no way. Nothing big ever happened in his village other than occasional mining accident or pillager sighting. It was never anything big enough for concern and any problem they ever had was easily dealt with by the village warriors or their iron golem.

George moved throughout his empty house and attempted to get ready for the day. After he'd dressed in a deep blue shirt and cotton jeans, he looked out his kitchen window as he waited for his mutton to cook. The other villagers were already out and about doing their work or just chatting around with each other.

He couldn't help but feel envious as he watched some of the villagers laughing and enjoying each other's company. That he was an outcast himself was obvious. His house was at the edge of the village after all and the villagers ignored him, not coming even close to his home.

George snorted to himself. Why should he expect any different of these people? The only reason they hated him was because of his different views. So what if George liked the idea of traveling outside their village? God forbid! So what if he acted kindly to wandering traders and strangers that traveled past the village? Isn't it natural to treat people with respect?

What was so wrong with the people of his village that they thought only the people in *their* village mattered? George sighed, recognizing he was getting too heated in his own thoughts. If he thought he could make it out on his own then he would have taken off long ago.

However, anyone with common sense knew the dangers out in the world; how easy it was to be torn apart by zombies, blown up by creepers, or even eviscerated by dreaded Endermen. And that's just the *mobs*. Other people could be worse, especially pillagers.

No, going it alone with little knowledge of the land was suicide. George frowned to himself, feeling a familiar sense of disappointment. Even if he didn't get along with his fellow villagers he supposed he should count himself lucky that there were so many of them. They could protect themselves from pillager raids and mobs if need be.

The smell of burning meat made George gasp as he hurried to take his almost burnt mutton out of his smoker. He groaned at letting himself continuously get carried away in his thoughts.

Despite the burnt after-taste, George felt a bit better after eating a warm meal for breakfast. Deciding he was low on supplies, George grabbed his brown bag and guided it over his shoulder, checking that he had some basic supplies on him before he slipped out of his house.

He ignored the other villagers as he took the path that he knew would take him into the plains' forest. While he was out he'd stock up on mushrooms for soup if he could find any. He also needed wood unless he could get his hands on some coal. He was running out of fuel.

As he entered the forest, he began to pick up sticks that he knew could provide good use for

making arrows or used as small fuel. He fished in his bag for his stone axe and frowned at how worn it was. If only it were easier to trade in his village. If only the villagers liked him enough to trade with him.

Sighing, George continued deeper in the forest and mindlessly collected sticks. He was getting close to a cave he'd found once deep in the forest when he heard a noise. It was a slight shuffle.

George tensed and looked all around, stuffing his supplies in his bag except for his worn-out axe. It was the best thing he had to defend himself with. The sun still shone through the trees enough that he didn't have to worry about much mobs, but still...

He realized the sound was coming beside the entrance to the cave and curiously went forward. Then suddenly, out of the corner of his eye, he saw a flash of odd yellow and tan skin then froze. A pillager?

A muffled groan filled the air and George's heart skipped a beat. That was a groan of pain if he ever heard it. It sounded like whoever it was meant to keep quiet. Was it a villager from his village?

George crept closer to the tree beside the cave until he came into full view of the person. He froze for a second time and his breath caught in his throat.

This was a stranger. There's no way he'd ever forget a person that looked like *this*. It was definitely a male and he was pretty tall despite sitting against the tree with his legs sprawled out in front of him. The strangest thing about him was the odd yellow hoodie and the mask. The hood was pulled over his head and his face was hidden by a strange unsettling white smiling mask that covered all but his mouth and the bottom of his nose.

George's eyes spotted the reason for the groan he heard earlier. The man was sitting in blood that was coming from his side. George unwillingly gasped. That was a lot of blood.

Biting his lips and making sure the man had no weapons easily in hand, he traveled closer and hesitantly called out, "H-Hello? Are you alright?"

The male seemed to be unconscious and didn't answer him. George got close enough to him so that he could check the injury. It wasn't pretty and George sucked in a breath as pulled apart the rip in his hoodie to look at the wound more.

It was strangely yellow, slightly brownish, and maybe a bluish gray in places...being colorblind George couldn't tell what color it was entirely but the smell alone let him know the man's wound was infected.

He needed to be treated or he'd die. George frowned as resolve settled in his bones. Whoever this person was...he didn't deserve to die alone in such a way. Who *knows* what happened to him? However, if he brought him back to the village the other villagers would only cast him out to die, not wanting to risk their safety to help a stranger. George pursed his lips.

"Wait here," He said softly, as if the man could somehow hear him, "I'll bring back stuff that can help!"

Immediately George took off in a full run, not wanting to leave the man by himself for too long. Since he knew the way, it only took him seven minutes to run back to his house. He ignored the strange looks he got as he sped into his house. He was breathing hard as he ran around his house, grabbing wool bandages, thread, and his last bottle of healing potion that he'd been saving for

himself. He dropped off his supplies and stuffed the bandages in his bag before running back out of his house.

Within minutes the other male was coming back into view. George rushed over and squatted next to him before pulling the supplies he packed out of his bag. He pushed up the male's hoodie and poured water on a piece of wool cloth before attempting to wash the wound as gently as he knew how. Afterwards he carefully began to stitch it up while continuously glancing up to make sure the man was still unconscious.

It wasn't the first time George had to stitch up a wound. He'd taught himself how to do it over the years. It's not like he could ask the other villagers for help whenever he got hurt after all. His eyes narrowed in concentration as he worked and he used a small knife to cut the thread when he was finished.

The next part was the hardest. He unwrapped the long wool bandage and grabbed the man's shoulder, pulling him forward slightly so he could wrap the bandage around the male's waist. It took longer than expected but he got it decently wrapped and George leaned back, pleased with himself for a job well done.

The only problem remaining was the healing potion. That would get rid of the infection and help the wound heal faster. However, the man was still unconscious and wouldn't be able to drink it. Maybe if he tried to rouse him?

George reached out, biting his lip, and shook the man gently by the shoulder, "H-Hey...excuse me?"

"You should wake up now," George said a little louder and felt brief annoyance that the man didn't even stir. He shook a little hard and the man fell to the right a little.

Suddenly, in a blur of movement too fast for him to see, the man sprung upright, groaning in pain. Then, just as quickly, the man registered someone was there in front of him and growled, pushing George away.

"W-Whoa, hey!" George cried out as he hit the ground. He backed away immediately as the man continued to growl warningly at him. Blood was slowly soaking into the bandage at his side.

"I'm...I just wrapped you up but if you move around like that then you'll waste all my hard work," George blurted, surprising himself with his reaction to the man's hostility.

The man's mouth parted and he straightened in surprise. He glanced down at his side like he was just noticing the bandage. Then, to George's surprise, he tensed up and looked over at him warily.

"You...you helped me?"

"I saw you there and noticed your wound was infected," George explained carefully, "So I grabbed some stuff and fixed you up."

The man canted his head and, although he was wearing a mask, George felt the man looking him up and down. A strange shiver ran up his spine but he ignored that when the man spoke again, "Why?"

"W-Why what?" George questioned, thrown off guard.

"Why'd you help me?" The man asked sounding incredulous, "You don't know me."

“No but...I saw you there and knew you’d die if I didn’t help,” George trailed off, at a loss for words, “Should I have *not* helped you?”

Miraculously the man looked stunned before he cracked a small smile, “Well...I don’t know. It’s not often you meet a helpful stranger.”

George can’t help the amusement that flittered across his face, “It’s not often I meet a stranger at *all*.”

The man tilted his head as he studied George, “What is your name?”

For once, George felt a bit wary of the stranger, “I dunno...what’s yours?”

The man huffed a small laugh and winced, his arm curling around his side, “I asked you first...”

“Before we get into that, I meant to let you drink this,” George announced as he dug into his bag for the small bottle of healing potion.

He was unprepared for the way the man’s whole body stiffened and his mouth curled into a snarl. George’s eyes widened, “What is that?!”

“Its...its a healing potion,” George blinked, shocked, “It’ll get rid of your infection and heal your wound quicker.”

“I don’t need it,” He ground out through his teeth and George felt a pang of annoyance. He got that he was a stranger but did the man need to be on guard that much around him?

“You don’t trust it?” George questioned, tilting his head. The man went silent for a moment and regarded George behind his mask.

“I don’t trust *you*,” He said in a heavy tone that made a strange heat wash over George. Then it registered what he said.

“Come on now,” George sighed, allowing his annoyance to show, “If I *wanted* to kill you then you’d be dead. Or I would have left you to die on your own.”

The man stayed silent but George could feel the man’s eyes were still on him. It made George feel unsettled and with a sudden surge of shock he realized that’s how he felt when he woke up this morning. That today was going to be different.

“That’s true but you never know what someone’s thinking,” The man spoke up darkly, distracting George from his thoughts. He parted his lips at the sad statement. The man must’ve been through some things to have such a violent reaction.

“This’ll help you though,” George sighed, glancing at the bottle, “If you don’t take it then the infection might not get better.”

“I’ll take my chances.”

George gawked at him. He didn’t trust him *that* much? Jeez, “What can I do for you to trust me here?”

“Nothing,” The man said stubbornly, curling up and George could see now that there were holes in the mask for the man’s eyes to see through and George was startled to see pale yellow eyes glaring at him. Yellow eyes? He must have a type of green eyes then. George felt a surge of frustration.

Why did it matter so much that the stranger didn't trust him? George didn't really understand it but he felt insulted. He wouldn't just kill a person for no reason at all. George knew he'd feel terrible if this man died when he could have helped him. And he *will* die if he doesn't drink the potion even if the man doesn't seem to think so himself.

George glanced at his knife and grabbed it. The male tensed immediately but then gasped when George suddenly slashed his own arm. It wasn't deep enough to need stitches or anything but George still winced at the sting of it.

"What the hell?!" The male cursed in his surprise and George saw his eyes widen behind the mask as George grabbed his healing potion and drank a small portion of it.

"I don't make it a habit to hurt other people," He said simply as he extended his hand and the bottle with the rest of the potion towards him.

If possible, the stranger's eyes widened even further before he let out a startling, and quite loud, laugh that turned into a wheeze. George's eyes widened at the sound of it.

"What the *fuck*? Who *does* that?!" The man wheezed, tears springing to his eyes as he clenched his side harder from the pain he felt as he laughed, "Who the hell are you?"

"I could ask you the same thing," George replied in half seriousness, half amusement. The man's laughter died down and, to George's surprise and pleasure, he grabbed the healing potion from him.

"Fine...I'm Dream," The man smirked a startling attractive smirk that made George feel that warmth again.

"Dream...? What kind of name is that?" George couldn't help but ask, grinning.

"A name I like," He replied simply before glancing down at the potion. George watched as Dream drank the rest and then he tilted his head when Dream looked at him before smirking again, "Thanks for the potion. And for helping me out."

"You're welcome," George smiled, feeling pleased that this stranger was becoming more relaxed around him, "I'm George by the way."

"George..." Dream parroted as he studied him again. George felt an odd urge to squirm under his gaze, "Well...nice to meet you George."

The way he said it made his stomach flip but George ignored that and returned the sentiment, "Nice to meet you too, Dream."

"So, what are you doing in the forest? Are you from close by?" Dream asked carefully, staring at him warily.

"I was gathering supplies," George replied honestly as he thought about how much he should say, "I'm from a village that's ten minutes from here."

Dream's eyes narrowed as he glanced into the forest. George thought about Dream's reactions thus far and realized that Dream was almost...savage-like? Wild?

"Are....are you from around here?" George asked hesitantly. Dream glanced over at him.

"No," He replied, almost flatly. It was obvious he didn't want to talk about where he was from. Suddenly Dream gestured to George's arm, "Don't you need to wrap that?"

“Oh...yeah, probably,” George blinked as he glanced down. Blood was running down his arm though it was nothing alarming. He grabbed a wool bandage from his bag and began to wrap it in silence. Dream studied him as he worked and it was almost uncomfortable.

“Are you usually this nice to strangers, George?” Dream asked curiously and George flushed a little.

“Well...yeah,” George answered slowly, “You’re the first one I’ve come across that needed my help though.”

Dream hummed in thought, “Why did you fix me out here instead of taking me to your village? Though I’m glad you didn’t.”

He finished tying the bandage on his arm and rose an eyebrow at Dream, “For one, the villagers in my village are...stuck up? Close-minded? They’d never accept a stranger like you, no offense.”

Dream’s eyes widened in understanding, “Oh I see...none taken. I’ve come across a couple of villages like that. No surprise there.”

George glanced up, feeling interested but decided not to ask. He sighed and shifted into a more comfortable position, “Besides...I didn’t want to give them more reason to hate me.”

He’d said that before he even really thought about it. Uncomfortable silence ensued and George cast his eyes to the side, suddenly awkward. Why had he said that? And to a complete stranger that could care less?

“What do you mean?” Dream finally asked, genuine confusion and even tension in his tone, “You don’t seem bad, if anything too innocent. Why would they hate you?”

George ignored that ‘too innocent’ comment and sighed, “I don’t get along well with any of them. My views on things are different....they don’t like me for it.”

“What about your family?” Dream questioned and George glanced at him, surprised to see that Dream looked a little angry.

“My parents died a few years ago...it’s just me,” George answered slowly, biting back the sadness he felt when he thought about that.

“Oh,” Dream trailed off, sucking in a breath, “Sorry....”

“It’s okay,” George shrugged, casting his eyes to the ground before changing the subject, “Can I... can I ask what *you’re* doing in the forest?”

Dream stiffened before he relaxed into a nonchalant attitude, “I was trying to escape some pillagers. One got a lucky hit. Eventually before I knew it I was here. I don’t remember much.”

“What happened to the pillagers? You were able to escape?” George asked with a brow raised. Dream’s eyes roamed over to him and after they flashed, they darkened.

“I killed them,” He said simply and George’s eyes widened as he suppressed a shiver. The simple way he said it and the stare made George realize...Dream was dangerous. Yet he didn’t feel afraid of him.

Silence enveloped the air but it wasn’t as awkward as before. George silently put away his supplies and glanced over at Dream. He jolted when he saw that Dream’s eyes were trained on him. He

glanced away, his cheeks heating up.

“H...How does your side feel?” He stammered, hating himself for it.

“It’s already feeling much better,” Dream answered in a low tone, his eyes still on George. He didn’t know how to feel about that. Why was Dream staring at him so much now? He felt like asking him would be too embarrassing.

Sighing, George slowly stood and reached into his bag for an apple he had on him. Dream was still staring at him silently when he turned and extended the apple towards him, “I better go back. You should eat this.”

“Thanks,” Dream smiled, showing off dimples George just now realized he had. George’s eyes widened.

“Will you be okay now?” George questioned hesitantly as he shuffled a couple steps back. He felt awkward. Dream was still looking at him. What was he thinking about?

“Yeah, I’ll probably get moving in another hour,” Dream answered as he finally cast his eyes away from George, making the smaller boy feel like he could breathe easier.

“Okay...” George trailed off and turned, looking over his shoulder, “Then good luck to you, Dream.”

Dream’s answering smile was one that caused another wave of heat to travel through his body. George quickly whirled around and resisted the urge to sprint out of the forest as his cheeks flamed hotly.

He walked away, glad Dream didn’t see his stupid reaction. The closer he got back to his village the more regret he felt. Talking with Dream...that was the closest he’d felt to another person since his parents. George wilted, unwilling to look behind him.

Dream would be gone soon and that tiny connection he felt to him would go with him. George sighed. That’s the way it would be. No matter how nice it was to be with someone else, George couldn’t hold onto that. He was just glad he was able to help someone. It was nice enough to know that, thanks to him, someone was going to get to live.

George smiled as he entered the village. He noticed that some of the villagers were staring at him oddly but he glanced away, ignoring that. It was a bit different than how they usually looked at him, but nothing was really new.

He put away his supplies and then sorted the sticks and logs he’d gotten before he ran into Dream. Too bad he didn’t get to go into the cave to get some coal. Oh well, there’s always tomorrow.

After he was finished sorting all his supplies and tidying up his small home, he put some more meat in the smoker to cook so he could eat lunch. His stomach was growling anyway. Distantly he wondered if Dream already left. It was getting close to noon now.

George felt a pit of loneliness creeping up on him and gently slapped his face with both hands. He wasn’t about to let himself feel that way. He had to go about his day just like normal. Just like he always had.

Nevertheless, it was hard to ignore the loneliness as he ate his cooked meat by himself. He sighed and cleaned up from cooking before going about doing some crafting.

For the rest of that afternoon he crafted some more blankets and bandages from wool he had left over. He needed to replace the bandages he used today. His eyes unwilling traveled to his bandaged arm. He didn't know what came over him when he cut himself. He just wanted to get Dream's trust somehow and he felt like drinking his own healing potion was the way to go.

Still, he didn't need to cut himself just to prove that. George chuckled, shaking his head. He didn't blame Dream for his reaction...his face then was so-

George's eyes widened. God, he kept thinking about Dream! Was he *that* lonely? George shook his head again but then looked out the window, startled to see that it was evening and the sky was beginning to darken.

A flash of fire from a torch caught his eye and he glanced out his window, even more startled to see numerous of his fellow villagers around his house, most of them with torches in their hands.

He left his wool behind and ran towards his front door, opening it to see the village elders. He narrowed his eyes at them, "W-What's going on?"

They didn't look friendly, but then again none of the villagers were ever friendly to him. So it shouldn't have surprised him as much as it did when the elders stepped aside and a couple of the village warriors grabbed his upper arms, dragging him outside.

"H-Hey!" George gasped, shocked. Usually they just ignore and shun him, "What are you *doing*?!"

They threw him to the ground and drew weapons on him. One finally answered him, "I saw you as you went into the forest and followed. I saw you with that *stranger*."

"Wha..." George's eyes widened and as he looked up from the ground, it was to see a circle of nothing but hostile faces. Suddenly a cold feeling washed over him, "W-What about it...?"

He jumped when one of the elders spat at him in disgust, "You helped that stranger! A stranger that is a *danger* to our village!"

"Then again we shouldn't be surprised since its *you*," Another warrior spoke up, sounding just as disgusted, "You wouldn't care if the rest of us were threatened by the stranger!"

A deep wounded-type anger filled George. Why did they treat him like this? What had he ever done other than express his own views? Did they really think he was like that?

"Dream isn't like that!" George found himself saying angrily, "He's not a danger to us unless we're a danger to *him*!"

George didn't really know that for sure, but he found himself saying that anyway. And now he couldn't take it back even if he wanted to. The hostile air about the other villagers increased.

"We want you out of our village, *traitor*!"

He gasped when he was struck in the head suddenly and realized someone threw a large rock at him. A *rock*! Warmth flooded down his face that he realized was his own blood, but he felt too stunned to do anything at first.

And then, shit started to go down.

There was a whirring noise as a flaming arrow struck a house close by and immediately it was being engulfed in flames. The group surrounding George gasped and some of them began to

disperse to deal with the fire.

There was more whirring and more flaming arrows. George began to panic just like the rest of the villagers. Were they being attacked by pillagers?!

He attempted to stand up but a dizzy spell washed over him and he fell back to his knees. One of the warriors saw him move and kicked him to the ground, "Ah!"

"Stay down, traitor! This is probably *your* fault! Acting all friendly with that stranger!" He yelled darkly, "You should have died with your parents!"

George's eyes widened and a rage encompassed him but then suddenly there were more strange sounds and the warrior fell to the ground, blood pouring out of a deep wound on his chest. George choked back a scream, shuffling backwards.

There were hands on him and George jumped, crying out in fear despite himself but the hands were impossibly gentle and when George whirled his head around, he dizzily spotted a familiar smiley mask.

"D-Dream?"

A growl emitted from Dream and George was suddenly pulled close. Dream was armed with an iron sword, which was rare to see in his village, and George was shocked. Where did he have that?!

Then George realized that Dream had the iron sword out in front of them, expertly wielded and he looked up into the shocked gazes of some of the villagers that were watching them with horror.

"Dream...?" George trailed off and gasped when Dream suddenly hooked one of his arms under George's legs and lifted him as if he weighed the same as a sack of flour.

He was being carried off before he knew it and he dizzily looked up at Dream's face, trying to see his eyes, but he couldn't, "D-Dream...what are you doing?"

"You're coming with me," Dream answered in a growl and he said it in a way that sounded like George had no option. George's eyes widened and if he didn't feel so dizzy and sick to his stomach, he'd probably immediately push away in shock.

"What?!" He gasped and then Dream's arms curled around him more, as if preventing him from escaping. George felt bewildered as Dream led him to one of the village horses and he briefly put George down.

"Dream, we can't take the horse from the villagers!" George cried out with a tad bit of hysteria and confusion.

"Fuck the villagers," Dream snarled, startling George, "Get on the horse, George."

George briefly glanced over his shoulder at the villagers running about, trying to put out the fires to their houses. No one was coming after them. George yelped when Dream impatiently picked him up from under his arms and put him on the horse before mounting the horse behind him.

"Dream...where are we going?" George asked, reeling from everything happening all at once. He blushed when Dream's arms reached around his waist for the reigns.

"Away from this shitty place," Dream ground out angrily as he snapped the reigns and the horse

took off. George glanced behind him at the retreating view of the burning village and knew that he should probably feel afraid that he was basically forced to leave by Dream, but all he felt was tear-inducing relief.

“Dream....Dream was that you...with the fire arrows?” George asked quietly but made no move to look over his shoulder at the other male that had been consuming his thoughts since they met.

“Yeah that was me. I used the last of my arrows,” Dream muttered, obviously still pissed about whatever, “They deserved more than they got.”

Why was Dream so mad at the villagers anyway? George’s eyes widened when he realized something, “I thought you were long gone by now! And where did you get that iron sword and arrows...or any of that?!”

He turned to face Dream for the first time in awhile and Dream’s expression seemed to be calming a bit. He glanced at George for a second, “I had things stashed...when you left I went for them.”

“Oh...” George said as he raised an eyebrow. That made sense, “Then...why are you still close by? I thought you were gonna leave soon after I left you in the forest?”

“I was going to at first,” Dream answered quietly, not looking at George, “But I stuck around for some things...then I decided to scout out your village to see where you were from and what your village was like.”

“Really?” George asked, shocked. Why would Dream do that?

“Then I saw you in your house and watched you a little bit. That’s when I noticed the villagers acting all weird,” Dream confessed and his hands tightened on the reigns angrily. His eyes narrowed, “Then they started doing what they were doing to you and yelling at you...all because you met me. So I decided that you’ll come with me.”

George blinked, Dream’s words registering slowly in his brain, “You were watching me...? That’s kinda weird Dream.”

Dream looked at him and then slowly smirked. George flushed and quickly turned around. He wasn’t as bothered by Dream’s weird behavior as he knew he should be.

He already knew that Dream seemed....almost uncivilized...almost but not quite savage? And apparently he was almost as starved for companionship as George felt sometimes.

“You’re not scared are you George?” Dream asked suddenly and George once again felt dizzy from both the blow from before and his emotions.

“No...” He trailed off, uncertain if he meant it or not, “But where are we going?”

“I’m gonna find us a safe place to camp before it gets too dark,” Dream answered with a kind of confident skip to his voice. At least he seemed to be doing better.

“Well...alright,” George said slowly, deciding to just go with it for now.

Dream was a little weird and he didn’t know much about him yet, but being with him wasn’t as bad as being in that village or being on his own.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

George learns why Dream's all alone and then he makes a decision; in which both George and Dream learn more about each other.

Chapter Notes

Thanks so much for the support on my very first chapter you guys! I'm so happy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The sky was darker when Dream finally pulled the horse to a stop. George realized they were still in the forest and glanced around uneasily. It wasn't until he did look around that he noticed a small cave opening tucked into the mountainside.

"Here, George," Dream spoke suddenly, startling him out of his thoughts. George blinked at the hand Dream had extended to him and grabbed it. He realized a bit too late that Dream meant to help him down but once he grabbed Dream's hand he merely jumped down himself.

A wave of dizziness washed over him again due to that but thankfully it wasn't as bad as the other times and Dream placed a hand on his shoulder to steady him, "Don't move around too fast."

"Yeah..." George breathed out, remembering almost too late not to nod his head. He glanced up at Dream warily, "Why'd we stop here?"

Dream smiled, looking amused, "We're gonna camp in that cave."

"*What-* but Dream, isn't that dangerous?!" George gasped, peering around Dream to look at the dark cave again.

"Don't worry," Dream laughed, almost wheezing for some reason, "It's small and a dead end. If we build a fire then nothing will come in."

"If you say so," George answered tensely, wincing at the ache in his head. Dream finished tying the horse's reign to a branch and looked at George seriously.

"Can you gather some wood?" Dream asked as he eyed George. George felt a pang in his chest that

wasn't entirely uncomfortable, "I'm going to look around and make sure there's no mobs."

"Sure," George nodded, almost thankful in a way. He knew *he* wasn't in shape enough to face any mobs and was relieved Dream was going to scout out to make sure there weren't any mobs beforehand.

"Stay close though," Dream warned, narrowing his yellowish eyes and George blinked, he almost sounded *worried*. That's odd.

"Okay," George grinned, unable to help himself. He turned and began to carefully gather large sticks or fallen branches to use as kindle and firewood.

Suddenly George wished that he could have gathered some of his supplies from his home before Dream whisked them off, but he knew based off Dream's reaction to his fellow- well his *old* villagers that there's no way they'd go back there. It's not like they'd be allowed there after what happened anyways.

He still wasn't sure how he felt about Dream ordering him around but Dream *did* get him out of that sticky situation with the villagers. George's heart sank as he remembered how the villagers had grown so hostile that they straight *attacked* him. Sure there was mutual dislike that grew over the years but he was born there. It seemed so easy for them to turn on him completely.

George sighed as he straightened, arms full of small sticks and thicker branches. He made his way back to the horse, feeling momentarily depressed with how things progressed so quickly in one day. There was a snapping noise and George whirled around, his head pounding by the reaction and then he felt silly for his almost wild reaction as Dream stood there, blinking at him, "You okay?"

"Yeah..." George answered, looking away from Dream's face, "Did you see any mobs?"

"There was a zombie; it was stuck in a hole," Dream grinned, sounding amused again, "I killed it just in case though."

George sighed, relieved, "Good. Well I got some things for a fire."

"Great. Let me help you with those," Dream said lightly as he sheathed his sword on his back and grabbed nearly all the bundle in George's arms instead of just half. George blinked but said nothing about that.

He followed Dream into the cave and resisted the urge to grab the taller male's sleeve when darkness engulfed them. Just as quickly as that urge appeared there was a small clacking noise and then there was a growing fire. George jumped as he glanced down to see Dream stacking the sticks and branches closer together as the fire spread. He recognized the object in Dream's hands.

“You had flint?” George asked in awe and Dream blinked up at him before smiling.

“Yeah. I have a lot of things,” He teased and George blushed lightly, frowning at him. Dream used the flint once more to spread the fire looking oddly pleased about something.

“I should get some more wood,” George thought aloud as he stared at the budding fire. There wasn’t enough wood for the fire to last even two hours. Dream glanced up quickly.

“No, I’ll do it,” Dream interjected and George blinked over at him in surprise. Dream then patted the stone floor of the small cave, “You should take care of your head while I do it.”

George’s eyes widened, his fingers automatically going up to the cut to the top right of his head. He winced when he accidentally brushed against it. It stung. Sighing, George gave a small nod and sat carefully next to the growing fire.

“Then I’ll be right back,” Dream spoke up after glancing at George again. George watched him walk out of the cave before reaching into the bag over his shoulder. He barely had anything left since he’d put things away back in his house at the village but there was still wool left.

George used a bit of water and cleaned his face of blood. It wasn’t too much since the cut wasn’t deep and for that he was thankful. He was probably already looking like a mess. George stuck his tongue out slightly in concentration as he cleaned up the cut and then taped a small portion of wool to it.

By the time he finished Dream was coming back looking oddly cheerful for someone who had been dying of infection hours earlier. He began placing the bundle he brought back with him into the fire as George watched him quietly.

“How’s your head?” Dream spoke up and George hummed tiredly.

“It still aches but it’s better than before,” He answered as he stared down into the flames. Now that they were settled in the cave, George’s body felt heavy.

“Awesome,” Dream said with a grin as he placed the last bundle into the fire. His grin fell when he noticed George still quietly staring into the flames, “You okay?”

“Huh..?” George blinked out of his daze and looked over at Dream, who was staring at him questioningly, “Oh yeah...just tired I guess.”

“You can sleep first. I’ll stay awake for a few more hours to keep watch for anything,” Dream drawled as he watched George’s surprised reaction.

“Keep wat-well I guess that makes sense,” George almost gasped before sighing, “I can keep watch too, at least later.”

“Oh you can?” Dream said in a teasing way again but George saw that he clearly doubted him, “Do you even know how to *swing* a weapon, George?”

“Of course I do!” George huffed and Dream laughed, “I just might not be as experienced as *you*.”

“Definitely not,” Dream smirked and George shuddered slightly, “Are you cold?”

George found it both amusing and astonishing that Dream seemed genuinely concerned for his wellbeing. They’d only met hours earlier and Dream had been so on guard then. What changed?

“Yeah...” George finally answered when Dream canted his head questioningly at him. Dream turned and started rummaging in a bag George didn’t even notice at all before then. He rose an eyebrow. How unobservant of him. He almost wanted to laugh if he didn’t feel so drained.

Dream held up something, it looked like a darker yellow cloth and then to George’s shock he realized it was *another* hoodie.

“How many of those do you *have*?!” He yelled and Dream started laughing that wheezing laugh.

“Just, like, three,” Dream answered, still laughing, “The one I’m wearing was my favorite though.”

George could tell he meant it because there was a touch of sadness lingering in his tone as he came down from laughing. George accepted the other hoodie quietly. Maybe he could fix Dream’s favorite hoodie tomorrow if he liked that one so much. He wasn’t sure he could get all the blood stain out though.

“Well...thanks,” George murmured, sitting up straighter to pull the large hoodie over his head. He was surprised to find it nearly engulfed him. The sleeves almost went over his fingers and he had to sit up on his knees so the hoodie could settle to mid-thigh.

“Wow, I knew you were tall but...” George trailed off when he glanced up and Dream was staring at him again. He quickly looked away, feeling like his cheeks would start flaming again.

“Is it warm enough?” Dream asked, something low in his tone. George couldn’t fight a huge yawn and he carefully nodded, “Okay, good.”

George pulled the bag from over his head and decided to use it as a pillow. It wasn’t the *best*

pillow ever but it was better than resting on stone. Hopefully soon they could get some bed rolls soon or something.

Speaking of which, George made a mental note to ask Dream what they were meant to do now once he woke up again. For now, his eyes fluttered shut unwillingly and sleep began to take him over as soon as he settled.

He swore that Dream said *something* before he fell asleep but he wasn't sure what.

The next morning, at sunrise, George blinked awake and couldn't have been more unprepared for the sight of Dream lying practically right next to him. He'd used his own bag for a pillow and was sleeping on George's left side, facing him.

'He still slept with a mask on?' George mused to himself, confused. Surely that wasn't comfortable. He couldn't see it very well, but it almost looked like there was a sprinkling of freckles on the taller man's cheeks.

Shaking himself out of his thoughts, George slowly sat up and winced as his sore body protested the movements. He stretched and glanced around the cave. It'd been hard to see the night before since it was so dark, but it really *was* a small cave. It was probably only big enough for a bear or two to rest in.

Good thing there weren't actually any bears. George smiled to himself as he stood carefully and stretched the kinks out of his body more. He glanced at Dream, who was still fast sleep. A wave of chill air washed across George's skin and he shivered, adjusting the hoodie he wore.

He nearly forgot Dream lent him the hoodie. An unwilling blush crept to his cheeks as he thought about Dream's reaction; that intense staring. This was impossible...why did almost everything Dream do make him feel embarrassed?

George grabbed his bag off the floor and decided to distract himself by hunting for food while he waited for Dream to wake up. It'd be cruel to wake him up now. He needed the rest anyway so his side would get better not to mention Dream kept watch last night and never woke him up. George made another mental note to check on Dream's injury later.

He walked into the forest, passing the horse that was thankfully still tied to the branch, and looked around for birds or animals of any kind. If he could spot one then he could go back and get his axe. Or maybe he could persuade Dream to let him use his iron sword.

He wandered around for a few minutes but stayed close just in case he needed to run back to the cave. He came through some thick bushes when he spotted apple trees. Oh perfect! George began climbing the first tree and started picking apples, feeling oddly at peace despite everything that happened the day before. After plucking as many apples as he could, he stuffed them in his bag and jumped down, picking a few that had dropped to the ground.

Then, suddenly, a figure burst through the bushes and the abruptness of it made George stumble to the ground in shock, his heart leapt into his chest. In the same second George realized it was just Dream, but Dream had an expression from *hell* on his face from what he could tell and George didn't know what to *do* about that.

And then Dream spotted him there half on the ground and his murderous expression vanished in an instant, relief taking its place, "George, there you are!"

"Uh," George stammered, unsure what to do, "H-Here I am."

Dream knelt next to him as George sat up slowly and continued, "What was that expression for? You scared the hell outta me by the way."

"I...well when I woke up and you were gone, I thought that maybe those villagers from before might have...." Dream trailed off, a distant look in his eyes. There was something else there too, but George couldn't figure out what it was.

"Oh," George blinked, suddenly relieved that Dream wasn't angry at *him*, "Sorry. I didn't want to wake you up since you need rest to heal properly. And we needed food!"

Dream looked over at him and smiled slightly, "Well thanks...but next time you should really warn me when you plan to wander."

"Aww were you worried about me that much?" George could help but tease and Dream rolled his eyes.

"Actually yes, you idiot," Dream muttered but George didn't feel offended. He laughed.

"Can you help me carry these? They're our breakfast," George grinned and Dream chuckled, nodding his head. George gave Dream some of the apples to carry and together they walked back to the cave.

"You know..." Dream piped up, uncharacteristically uncertain and George glanced over at him. He spoke up more quietly, "I kind of lied. I *did* think the villagers could have come and that made me mad...but at first I thought you just left."

George's eyes widened, his heart skipping a beat. It was obvious that Dream was upset by the idea that George would just up and leave, "I'm...I'm sorry Dream. I'm not the type of person that leaves for no reason though."

"Right," Dream nodded seriously and then playfully added, "The look on your face earlier was

pretty funny though.”

George pouted, “Only because you looked like you were about to start *murdering* someone.”

Dream’s smirk widened and George felt an odd thrill go through him. Right...Dream was dangerous. Well dangerous to everyone but George. Why was that though?

“If those villagers bothered us again I would have,” Dream shrugged, still smirking and they were back to their cave by then. George supposed the idea should have bothered him, but it didn’t. They silently packed away the extra apples and kept one out each to munch on for their breakfast.

Neither of them said anything as they sat next to the extinguished fire pit and ate. When he was finished, George regarded Dream silently. He felt anxious but he remembered that he needed to ask Dream some questions, “Hey Dream?”

“Hmmm?” Dream hummed, looking over at him. He wasn’t done eating.

“What are we going to do now?” George asked hesitantly and he hated how anxious he knew he appeared. Dream froze, “You wanted me to come with you...but are we just traveling or do you have a goal in mind?”

Dream went silent for a minute and his eyes darkened slightly, “Well, actually, I’ve been traveling for a reason.”

“Really?” George piped up, curious. He perked slightly, glad Dream wasn’t angry. For some reason, Dream relaxed and smiled at him.

“Yeah. I’ve been traveling on my own for years now,” Dream added, a hint of something to his voice. George felt a sympathetic pang of loneliness at his words but shook his head to clear his thoughts.

“What have you been traveling for?” George asked carefully, not wanting Dream’s guard to go up again. Dream stiffened and he glanced at George, looking uncertain.

“I’m looking for someone,” He answered quietly and George’s eyes widened. George decided not to say anything. He didn’t want to cross any lines and have Dream become angry with him. When George didn’t say anything Dream glanced at him, raising a brow, “You’re not gonna ask me who I’m looking for?”

“You’ll tell me if you *want* to,” George answered hesitantly, averting his eyes for a moment. He didn’t want to pressure Dream to answer questions he might not want to answer. When he glanced back, he saw Dream looking at him with slightly wide eyes.

“You’re so *different*,” He muttered so quietly that George almost didn’t hear him. His heart skipped a beat. Was that a good or bad thing?

“I’ll tell you,” Dream spoke up before George could think too hard about what Dream said, “And then you could decide for yourself if you want to join me or not.”

“Okay,” George smiled, somewhat pleased that Dream was trusting him a bit. Though inwardly he was sort of amused. He was dragged out of his village and it seemed *that* wasn’t an option but now he had one? George wanted to laugh but he refrained from it. He wondered if Dream knew how he acted sometimes.

“Five years ago my village was attacked by a huge pillager raid,” Dream sighed, looking distinctly uncomfortable and George gasped, not expecting that, “Everyone was slaughtered and those that weren’t were taken away by the pillagers.”

“Taken away?” George couldn’t help but ask. He felt startled. Pillagers don’t often kidnap people. In fact, it was *unheard* of. Pillagers were ruthless and only sought to destroy, ruin, and steal things...not steal *people*!

“Yeah. It was mostly the teenagers and young adults that were taken,” Dream growled and George frowned sadly, “The attack was...terrible to say the least. My entire family was slaughtered in the attack...”

The silence that ensued was heavy and George’s heart went out to him, “I’m so sorry to hear that...truly...”

Dream nodded, it felt easier telling this story to George because George *did* understand what it was like to lose someone. Dream wasn’t sure how George had lost his parents but it didn’t really matter at the moment.

“Then...c-can I ask....” George felt frustrated at his stammering but he didn’t know how to word the question just right. He didn’t want to upset Dream more than he already was.

Dream smiled slightly, somehow knowing what he was trying to ask, “The person I’m looking for is a friend that was taken during that attack.”

He watched George’s reaction carefully. George’s eyes widened before his face fell into a sad empathic one that Dream was learning *had* to be a George thing. No one he’s ever come across was like that. None except *George*. It made his heart skip a beat.

“My best friend was captured during that raid. His name is Sapnap,” Dream continued and this time his heart twisted painfully as he thought about his friend, “He was coming back to help me... I...I was attacked but I wasn’t really fighting back like I should have. The despair and shock I felt

after losing my family was too much back then. I got hurt pretty bad but I remember seeing him defending me at one point before I blacked out. When I woke up he was gone just like the other survivors. I know he was taken because I never found his body.”

There was more silence and Dream looked over to see George staring at him with that same empathic look from before. It wasn’t pity, just an understanding sadness and Dream was sort of mesmerized by George sometimes.

“He sounds like a great friend,” George finally spoke up, although quietly, “So he was taken by those pillagers...do you have any idea who they are?”

Dream allowed his frustration to show, “I only know that most of them had this strange tattoo on their necks. It was a spiky crescent shape. I’ll *never* forget it. I’ve tried researching to figure out where their outpost is but I’ve had no luck all these years.”

“Really?” George gasped and Dream glanced at him. George stared into space, “I know pillagers sometimes have tattoos representing a clan but I haven’t heard of that particular one.”

“A lot of people haven’t,” Dream sighed, staring at the ground, “I’ve tried asking villagers when I come across them but they don’t exactly receive me well. And sometimes they’re hostile towards me and won’t let me close to the village.”

“Maybe because of your mask,” George joked lightly and Dream huffed, smirking a bit, “You do look kind of unsettling, Dream.”

“Do I unsettle *you*?” Dream asked suddenly and George felt a jolt when Dream looked at him directly.

“No,” George lied, hoping the other party couldn’t tell. If he did, he didn’t let it show, “So then... you think your friend, Sapnap, is still alive?”

Dream tensed for a second and George felt like slapping himself for such an insensitive question. Dream relaxed a moment later, “Yes I think he’s still alive.”

“What makes you think so?” George questioned curiously. Dream looked at him and just smirked.

“A gut feeling,” He answered and then he wheezed at George’s incredulous look, “Plus Sapnap is actually pretty smart and cautious. I’m sure he’s kept himself alive. Besides I have to keep searching until I at least find out what happened to him.”

“I see,” George trailed off. Dream’s face lit up when he talked about Sapnap. He must really care for him. George smiled to himself. So Dream was someone who really cared for his friends? That

was nice. Looks like he doesn't really need to think about his answer to Dream's first suggestion then.

"I'll help you," George spoke up confidently and Dream nodded before whirling his head around to look at George in shock. George laughed louder than he had in *years*.

"Wait, what did you say?" Dream asked, breathless.

"I said I'll help you," George smiled before becoming a bit more serious, "It isn't right that you have to do this all on your own especially after all these years."

George didn't add that he wanted to help Dream because he felt Dream helped him. Dream *did* help him, he helped him escape his pathetic lonely life in a village where no one even *liked* him.

Dream was staring at him like he was something otherworldly, which made him want to chuckle, but then he reached out and George's eyes widened when Dream wrapped an arm around the back of his head and pulled him in a tight hug. His face was pressed against Dream's chest.

"*Thank you*," Dream whispered around the lump in his throat. He didn't know what else to say other than that. No one has ever offered Dream their help. At least not in this way. George heard his story and answered him so quickly, like he didn't even need to *think* about it. George was too good of a person. Dream felt in that moment that he was extremely lucky to have met George.

George was shocked at the level of emotion Dream showed for a second before wrapping his arms around the taller male. He smiled genuinely, "You're welcome. Besides I've never left my village before and this'll be like a big adventure for me!"

Dream let go of George and chuckled, "Yeah."

"But...did you have a lead? Is that why you were close to my village?" George asked as he tilted his head at Dream.

"Yeah. I was told that someone in a huge town from the taiga village close to here was looking for the same group of pillagers as me," Dream explained slowly as he looked outside the cave thoughtfully, "That's where I was headed before a random group of traveling pillagers attacked me close to your village."

"Really?" George gasped, his brown eyes lighting up, "You think that person might know something you don't know?"

"It's possible," Dream shrugged as stretched out his legs, "I'm also wondering if they're looking for the same group of pillagers for the same reason as me."

“You think someone was taken from them too?” George inquired and felt a pang in his chest at the thought. Dream nodded, “Why would these pillagers take people anyways?”

“Who knows? I intend to find out though,” Dream scowled dangerously and George’s heart skipped a beat.

“You mean *we’ll* find out,” George butt in as he grinned when Dream peered over at him. Dream smiled in return.

“Yeah, *we’ll* find out,” He amended, feeling a warmth spread across his chest at the words, “We should get going, George. It’s still another day and a half ride to that taiga village.”

“Okay...but how do you know exactly where it is though?” George questioned in confusion and Dream laughed, fishing in his bag for a map.

“The person who told me about the village marked it on this map for me,” Dream explained and George’s eyes lit up in understanding, “I also have a compass.”

“Nice,” George grinned and Dream stared at his face for a moment before looking away when George looked back up at him, “Then let’s get going!”

“Yeah, let’s go,” Dream grinned as they both stood and began gathering their things.

“We really need to get another horse soon,” George spluttered in embarrassment, unsure what to do with his hands as Dream urged the horse to pick up speed. Dream laughed, unable to help himself. He’s noticed how easily embarrassed George was and it was honestly very amusing to him. He didn’t mind George’s closeness though. It was sort of comforting.

“We’ll find one for you,” Dream chuckled and then he noticed George squinting, “Is the sun bothering you?”

“Uh, kinda,” George replied, still sounding embarrassed, “My eyes are kind of sensitive I guess.”

Dream hummed, frowning to himself. He urged the horse to go a little faster. He wanted to get as much ground in as he could so that way they could find a decent place to camp when it got dark.

His attention was drawn by George when he noticed George’s face brightening as he used his hand to block some sunlight and look around. He was grinning and Dream couldn’t help but smile. Who could ever be as mean as those villagers were to someone like *George*?

“Hey George,” Dream spoke up, an idea popping into his head on how to get to know the smaller

male more. George squinted over his shoulder, looking at Dream questioningly.

“Yeah?”

“How about we ask each other some questions? Get to know each other more?” Dream suggested and blinked when George blushed a bit. Dream felt an odd urge to smirk.

“Uh, sure...you can go first. I’m not really sure what to ask,” George nearly stuttered and that’s when he realized George was still on edge with him. He’d seen it earlier when George was questioning him. He’s *nervous* around Dream; he’s afraid to anger him. Something in Dream’s chest tightens. He doesn’t want George to be scared of him.

“Alright I’ll start,” Dream drawled, keeping an eye on the path in front of him, “Easy one. How old are you?”

George’s eyes widened, “Oh. Um, I’m 23.”

Dream rose an eyebrow. He sure didn’t *look* twenty-three years old, “I see. I’m 21 myself.”

“Really?” George replied, his eyes lighting up in interest and Dream grinned, nodding his head, “I thought for sure you’d be older than me.”

“Nope,” Dream teased, still grinning, “Your turn to ask me something.”

“Well...how long have you been friends with Sapnap?” He asked hesitantly and a cold feeling washed over Dream for a moment.

“Since we were toddlers I guess,” Dream answered quietly, clenching the reins.

“Oh...must be nice,” George sighed and Dream cocked an eyebrow before paling when he remembered how George was treated in his village. Did that mean he’s never had a friend before?

“Yeah it’s nice,” Dream frowned before forcing himself to smile a little, “Sapnap would probably like you a lot.”

“Really?” George perked up, pleased. He was smiling again.

“Yeah. I can’t wait for you two to meet,” Dream grinned and George laughed. George’s laughs always sound so cheerful.

“It’s your turn now by the way,” George admitted, sounding amused and Dream blinked.

“Oh, right,” Dream chuckled, “What’s your favorite color, George?”

Surprisingly, George’s smile fell and he was silent for a moment before answering, “Blue.”

“Blue?” Dream parroted, eyes narrowing at George. Why did he react like that? George glanced at him and then looked away, nodding.

“It’s the color I see best...the most vibrant one anyway,” George explained as he looked up at the path ahead of them, “I’m colorblind.”

Dream sucked in a surprised breath and felt a bit guilty for some reason, “Oh...what’s that like exactly if you don’t mind me asking?”

George smiled again, chuckling, “Um, I don’t know how to explain it. The colors I have the hardest time seeing are green and red. Like right now you look almost dark yellowish?”

Dream rose an eyebrow, “Oh...interesting...”

“Yeah. I’ve always been this way so it doesn’t really bother me as much as people think,” George shrugged but then added, “It’s just difficult sometimes.”

“I bet,” Dream nodded in agreement. Then suddenly the pair noticed something in the distance and gasped.

“Dream, is that a village?” George asked, clearly surprised. Dream felt surprised too. There wasn’t a village marked on the map there. Figures, “That’s not the one though. This isn’t a taiga biome.”

“No it’s not the one,” Dream retorted lightly as he urged the horse on, “But this is good. We can camp here tonight and reach the taiga village sometime tomorrow.”

“Well, sounds good to me,” George grinned, “I was actually hoping to do some trading if they’ll let me!”

Dream said nothing as they got closer to the village. It wasn’t a big village, not as big as George’s was. Once they were close enough some of the villagers looked at them warily. Dream stopped the horse by an empty fence just outside the village and went to tie the horse to it.

He was surprised when George hopped off the horse with a genuine smile on his face and Dream had to remember that George was probably used to ignoring negativity around him. He grinned and

followed as George beckoned him to walk with him.

As they entered the village people continued to stare at them with anticipation and wariness. Some outright froze when they caught a glimpse of Dream. It was then he realized his hoodie was still covered in his blood. That surely didn't help his image at all.

George followed Dream's gaze and winced, "Oh...right. No wonder they look spooked."

For some reason this made Dream laugh and surprisingly, George laughed as well. Then George spoke up, "Later I can try to fix and clean it up for you."

"What....really?" Dream asked, turning to the smaller boy in shock. George nodded, grinning as he did, "Thanks..."

"No problem," He replied and his attention was stolen by an approaching villager. Dream watched George tense ever so briefly and it made him frown.

"Hello travelers," The villager greeted and Dream decided this must be a village elder. He was watching them carefully, "What brings you here?"

"We...We just wanted to trade a few things...possibly," George answered timidly, his fingers curling into the hoodie Dream let him wear. Dream still thought it made him look impossibly smaller, especially standing next to *him*.

"We also want to stay a night here. We'll leave in the morning," Dream spoke up nonchalantly, "We haven't had a chance to clean up."

"I see," The villager replied, his eyes roaming over Dream's attire before he turned to George, "We have some things available for trade over there. As for a room, there is a empty house over there you could borrow for the night."

George and Dream followed where the elder was pointing. It was in the back of the small village next to another fenced area that held cows. George smiled and turned to the elder almost shyly, "Thanks."

"You're welcome," The elder nodded and he walked past them. Dream watched the tension leave George's shoulders once the elder left.

"Why don't we go see if there's anything we can trade?" Dream spoke up, placing a hand on George's shoulder. George nodded hesitantly.

They walked side by side closer to the center of the village. Dream kept his eyes down on the path and his hands in the pockets of his hoodie. He was starting to get tired of all the stares. He only looked up when George stopped at the first market stall. The man attending it welcomed them with a smile.

Dream watched with slight fascination as George began talking with the villager. He still appeared hesitant but George seemed to brighten the longer the villager didn't frown at him. George was able to get a little bit with some things he owned in that bag of his.

"Yes!" George cried victoriously as he was handed two thick and furry leather bed rolls. Dream blinked in surprise, "Thank you!"

"No, thank *you*!" The villager laughed as he pawed through all the cut wool George traded him.

"Bed rolls?" Dream asked as he shifted closer to George to look at the items. The smaller male glanced up at him almost shyly before nodding, "Not bad..."

"It's not better than a *real* bed of course," George laughed a small laugh, "But it's better than sleeping on a hard ground."

"True," Dream smiled, "I've just never come across anyone that would actually trade them before. Not that people trade to *me* anyways."

"I was worried they wouldn't have any," George admitted, casting his eyes away from Dream, "But now we can rest easier."

"Yeah..." Dream trailed off. He looked up and around. It was already starting to become darker, "Let's head in that house they're letting us borrow."

"Okay," George nodded, following after Dream with the bedrolls gathered closely in his arms. Dream smirked at how small George looked before shaking his head.

Once they made it inside the small home they both froze when they realized one critical oversight. There was only one bed. Dream glanced at George and the rosy blush that graced his face was quite flattering.

"Good thing you just got two bedrolls, huh?" He joked, startling George, "I'll sleep on one of them. You take the bed."

"What?! No!" George frowned, taking a step away from Dream, "You still have to recover so *you* should sleep on the bed!"

Dream rolled his eyes, “George, I’m not taking the bed. So either you take it or we’re both sleeping on bed rolls.”

“Wha...Dream you’re just being stubborn,” George muttered, annoyed and Dream chuckled.

“You have *no* idea,” He flashed a smile and George sighed, shaking his head, “Or if you really want me to sleep in the bed we can just share.”

It was a joke. Dream found that he liked making George blush. So when George looked at him, his eyes widening and a scarlet blush flooding his face, Dream wheezed happily.

“W-What?! You’re such an *idiot*, Dream!” George protested, willing his blush to go away as Dream continued wheezing.

“Sorry, sorry,” He laughed, raising his hands to placate the smaller male. George shot him a dirty look because it was obvious he wasn’t *actually* sorry.

A little later they had a bedroll all made up for Dream and they were sitting on the floor against the bed together, both eating a piece of bread and apples they collected earlier. Dream hummed, “I’ll have to hunt for some meat soon. We’ve had nothing but apples.”

“Yeah and maybe soon I can try to make some arrows,” George spoke up as he looked over at Dream, “I’ve done it before. We’d have to get feathers though.”

Dream smirked, “Awesome. I know how to make them too. Feathers aren’t too hard to come by...”

“Hey, do you have a pickaxe, Dream?” George asked suddenly and Dream blinked at him.

“Yeah, in my pack, why?”

“If we see any good caves on the way to that taiga village we should try to find more iron,” George explained as he took another bite of his bread, “I don’t have a weapon and I’ll need one.”

“That’s true,” Dream’s eyes widened in realization, “We’ll have to keep an eye out.”

There was a moment of silence as they ate and Dream grinned, unable to help himself, “Though *I* can protect you, of course.”

“Oh my *God*, Dream,” George groaned, pushing his shoulder playfully, “I didn’t think you were like this.”

Dream laughed, feeling more alive than he's felt in years.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you all enjoyed! Let me know what you think!

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Dream and George bond over past memories; they finally meet the person they're looking for in the taiga biome.

Chapter Notes

Thank you guys so much for all the love! I appreciate it so much! Thank you guys that have commented, each one has made me smile!

Enjoy!

The next morning George woke up to see that Dream wasn't there. His bed roll was folded up and there was a piece of paper on it. Curiously he got up and inspected the paper, blinking when he discovered it was note from Dream.

George,

I went to see if one of the villagers had a fishing pole so that we could try and catch some fish. If I'm not there when you wake up then that means they had one and I'm fishing.

Dream

George found that Dream's handwriting was actually nice. It suited him if such a thing made sense. He placed the note away and decided to go join Dream. If he was near water then he could go ahead and try to fix Dream's hoodie for him while he fished; if he was fishing like he said he might that is.

He slipped out of the small house with all his things, just in case, and smiled when some of the villagers looked at him. His heart unwillingly skipped a beat out of habit. At least here the villagers didn't look at him with disdain. They were just wary of potentially dangerous strangers. George realized he wasn't sure where Dream went exactly, so he stopped the closest villager and shyly asked, "Um, sorry to bother you. Have you seen my friend in the ye- I mean green hoodie?"

"Oh the smiley-faced guy?" The woman blinked and George let out a chuckle despite himself at the way she identified Dream, "He went down that path to the left. He was going fishing I think."

George brightened, trying to appear friendly, "Thank you!"

"You're welcome," She smiled and it made George feel happy. There were actual nice people in

the world. Sounds dramatic but it's hard to believe sometimes.

He took the path as instructed and within a couple of minutes he spotted his friend relaxing on the bank of the river, a fishing pole in hand. There was also a woven basket at his side and George noticed there were already a couple of cod in there. Wow.

"Dream!" George boomed, grinning. Dream didn't even startle, how unfair, but did turn around quickly.

"Good morning George," He smirked, his eyes lighting up at the sight of the smaller male, "I see you got my note."

"Of course I did," George rolled his eyes, setting his things down beside Dream when he got close enough, "And I see you already caught some fish."

"Yup. I figured I'd catch a little more so we could have fish for dinner too," Dream stated before he smiled again, "The villager I got this fishing pole from said I could keep it."

"That's nice of him," George blinked before remembering why he came to find Dream, "Oh, hey, I can take care of your hoodie now if you wanna take it off."

"Sure," Dream grinned as he set his fishing pole aside and stripped himself of his beloved hoodie. George tried not to stare at the black tank top that exposed his friend's impressive muscles and well-toned chest.

He glanced away after he grabbed the hoodie from Dream and turned to the water, "I'm not sure all the blood will come out though."

"That's alright," Dream shrugged, "I'll probably just have to get a new one."

George went silent as his eyes narrowed his concentration. He scrubbed vigorously for awhile and was pleased to see some of the blood coming out. He saw movement out of the corner of his eye and glanced up to see Dream scooting to sit right beside him, "Dream?"

"What?" Dream asked, turning to him with a grin. George decided it was just one of those random things Dream did that he didn't understand. He was monetarily distracted when he noticed that Dream's hair was longer than he expected and swept handsomely across his forehead. It was also a dirty-blond color. Interesting.

"I've got some of the blood stain out already," George said, trying to distract himself as he went back to scrubbing Dream's hoodie in the river.

“Perhaps this will help,” Someone said and there was a flurry of movement as Dream pushed himself in front of George quickly, narrowing his eyes at the stranger. George’s eyes widened at the back of Dream’s head. How was he so *quick*?

“Sorry, didn’t mean to startle you,” The man spoke up as he put his hands up, glancing warily at Dream’s mask, “I’m a cleric here. I don’t mean any harm.”

“Oh a cleric!” George gasped and then beamed in delight, “That’s great!”

His excitement apparently surprised both Dream and the stranger. The stranger chuckled and Dream scooted back, relaxing. The stranger pointed to himself, “My name’s Punz! Nice to meet ya!”

“Nice to meet you too,” George laughed at the strange name, “I’m George and this is Dream.”

“Interesting accent,” Punz grinned at George before he turned to grab a bottle out of his bag and hand it towards George. Punz noted that Dream’s eyes were following his every move behind the mask and couldn’t help but feel amused. How protective, “This is a type of solution that’ll get rid of those blood stains no sweat!”

“Oh wow,” George said in surprise as he grabbed the bottle. He felt a tad bit uncertain of that though, “Thanks...”

“No problem. I just remember seeing this dude with his blood-stained clothes last night. He just about gave everyone a heart attack,” Punz laughed and Dream mouth quirked a bit in amusement, “So I was planning on giving that away to you guys anyways.”

“Well thanks,” Dream decided to speak up since he didn’t sense any malice from Punz.

“No problem! Let me know if you need anything else, like medicine, before you leave town,” Punz smirked before turning and walking off.

“He was nice,” George grinned as he looked at Dream. Dream just nodded before returning to fishing, sneaking glances at George when the smaller male wasn’t looking. George looked at the bottle Punz gave him and noticed the liquid was a blue-gray. He shrugged and uncorked it before pouring it over the stains on Dream’s hoodie. He decided to let the solution settle for a minute before putting it back in the river.

“How’s your side?” George spoke up as he glanced at Dream. He’d gotten strangely quiet. Dream stared over at him. It felt weird to see that smiley-mask on him without the hood of his hoodie there as well.

“Oh, it itches a lot but it feels better,” Dream shrugged as he glanced at his side, “That healing potion you gave me really helped.”

“And here you thought I was poisoning you or something,” George replied smugly and Dream rolled his eyes.

“Speaking of, how’s your arm and your head?” Dream questioned as he glanced at both injuries on George.

“My head’s not hurting anymore. My arm’s almost fully healed too,” George grinned before he returned his attention to Dream’s hoodie, placing it in the river and resuming his scrubbing, “Sorry if what I’m doing startles the fish by the way.”

“It does but that’s fine,” Dream shrugged, watching George work, “I needed a break anyways. It gets so boring.”

“I bet,” George huffed a laugh and his cheeks tinged pink when Dream started staring at him again. He decided to ignore that and focus on the hoodie. To his surprise, the blood stains were slowly being scrubbed away. Just what was that solution?

A few minutes later George held up the soaked hoodie and miraculously all the blood stains were gone. He looked at Dream with an open-mouthed smile and then blushed when he noticed Dream already looking at him with a smirk.

“That’s awesome! I’ve never seen stains come out like that,” He said and George cast his eyes away, embarrassed, “Thanks George.”

“Well I still have to stitch the tear but you’re welcome,” He huffed with a small smile and Dream laughed. George set the soaked hoodie on the grass so that it could begin to air-dry before he attempted to stitch it up. It was kind of peaceful after that as George leaned back on his hands and enjoyed the sun rays while Dream actively continued to fish now that George was done washing his hoodie in the river.

George flinched when Dream yelped suddenly and he looked over to see Dream struggle with his fishing rod briefly before yanking it upwards, sending a huge cod flying in the air. George gasped in shock, “Whoa!”

“This is the biggest one yet,” Dream grinned as he unhooked it and set it in the basket, a pleased look on his face that sent warmth spreading in George’s stomach.

“Well at least we have enough for lunch and dinner,” George said after a moment, his voice sounding lower than normal. Dream glanced over at him.

“Yeah,” He agreed, smiling.

Nothing more was really said after that and after a few more minutes of enjoying the sun, George noticed Dream put away his fishing rod and sit next to him. He watched as Dream stretched out his long limbs and wondered why everything about Dream always seemed to distract him somehow.

Dream closed his eyes and lifted his chin slightly, to feel the sun as much as he could. George’s eyes traveled to the odd smiley-mask that was always present on the taller male’s face and figured now was a good a time as any to ask about it, “Dream...?”

“Yeah?”

“Why do you wear that mask all the time?” George asked quietly, sitting up straighter and bringing his knees to his chest. Dream went silent but his eyes were still closed. For a moment, George’s heart skipped a beat and feared that maybe he shouldn’t have asked.

Eventually though Dream answered, “It makes me comfortable...” George blinked at the unexpected answer. He didn’t really know how to respond to that and luckily he didn’t have to because Dream added in a quiet voice, “My little sister made this mask for me a long time ago.”

“Oh...” George trailed off, wrapping his arms around his knees, “I see...”

“My parents fought a lot at the time,” Dream continued hesitantly and George’s eyes widened as they traveled back to Dream. His eyes were still closed but he was frowning, “I didn’t realize but my sister did...that I was frowning a lot then. She made the mask as a joke, something to cheer me up. She said I could wear it and then I’d be smiling even when I couldn’t.”

“Dream...” George whispered, feeling the other male’s pain. It made his chest tighten painfully to think of how much Dream suffered.

“After the attack...I just decided to wear it at first so that no one could remember what I really looked like,” Dream went on seriously, “I didn’t want any of those pillagers to remember my face and realized I’d survived the attack but after awhile I just became uncomfortable taking it off.”

“I just thought you wore it to be mysterious,” George joked quietly, hoping to cheer Dream up. It maybe have worked a little because Dream laughed slightly.

He opened his eyes and looked at George’s face. George briefly wondered what his expression must have looked like and he wanted to know what Dream was thinking. He was surprised when Dream sat up slowly, still watching George, “Can I ask *you* something now?”

“Sure,” George nodded, unable to look away.

“How did your parents die?” Dream asked hesitantly, still watching George’s face. George choked on a gasp and his eyes widened before he finally looked away from Dream to stare at the ground. His shoulders slumped. He’d never told this story to anyone before now...

“There’s a ravine close to my hometown and...” George trailed off, wincing. He didn’t realize Dream had scooted closer to him until he felt Dream’s upper arm briefly brush against his, “I was only eight-years old but I begged them to let me go mining with them in the ravine. They eventually agreed because they didn’t want to leave me alone. Even back then the villagers didn’t really like me and they were concerned.”

“That’s stupid!” Dream blurted out angrily and George jumped at the loudness of it. Dream frowned, “Sorry. I didn’t mean to interrupt. What...what happened George?”

“They were crossing the bridge at the top of the ravine but I was stupid...I got scared by how deep the ravine was and didn’t trust the bridge,” George muttered, hating himself anew as he remembered, “They’d already crossed and Dad was gonna come back to help me but then a creeper came through the shade of the trees behind them.”

Dream sucked in a breath, momentarily distracting him, “George...”

“Dad ran back to help Mom beat it and they managed to push it back away from them,” George retailed, picturing it vividly in his mind, “I was a coward. I still didn’t cross that bridge. I didn’t help them. It blew up and it thankfully didn’t hurt them, however, it blew up close to the edge of the ravine and the area began collapsing. The ground collapsed right from under my parents and they...”

Dream’s hand landed on his forearm carefully and he looked over to see Dream watching him with an understanding sadness, “They fell in the ravine?”

George nodded, his eyes threatening to burn. Dream’s hand tightened on his arm, “I’m so sorry, George.”

“Yeah, me too,” George sighed, closing his eyes, “I’m so sorry you lost your family too. You also had your friend taken away from you. I know a little bit about how you feel.”

“I know,” Dream replied slowly and George opened his eyes to see Dream smiling at him. He managed a small smile back and curled his fingers in the hoodie he borrowed from Dream. Speaking of...

“I better see if I can fix that tear now,” George cleared his throat and Dream blinked, like he forgot all about that. He pulled away from George.

“Oh. Right,” He laughed lightly and George laughed with him. He turned and winced when he felt how cold and wet the hoodie still was. It wasn’t dripping anymore though so maybe it wouldn’t be so bad.

He reached for his bag and pulled out the thread he’d had beforehand and began to stitch the tear slowly, wanting it to be as good as possible. He was in the middle of working when his traitorous stomach let out an embarrassingly loud rumble. Dream’s eyes widened at him and he blushed heavily.

“Why don’t I go cook us up some fish I caught?” Dream grinned at George’s blush, “It’s not quite lunch yet but I’m kinda hungry too.”

“Okay, sounds great,” George replied without looking at Dream. He was almost halfway done stitching Dream’s hoodie and felt pretty proud with how it was turning out.

“Alright, be right back!” Dream said as he stood and jogged to pick up his basket of caught fish before he rushed off, probably back to their borrowed home or to someone who could cook the fish for them. George wasn’t sure.

He didn’t know how much time passed but he finally finished stitching the tear in Dream’s favorite hoodie. George turned it over in his hands, inspecting it for anymore tears and was thankful there weren’t anymore. He was pretty amazed at his job well done. He’d stitched it so carefully you almost couldn’t tell there had been a tear at all. He beamed.

Standing slowly and wincing when his legs ached, George grabbed his things and slowly made his way back into the other village. He was a bit nervous when he realized most of the villagers were out and about. He got thrown curious looks but other than that the villagers seemed content to go about their day. George felt distantly relieved and looked around.

Where was Dream? Was he back at their borrowed home still cooking? It felt like it’d been forever when he got done stitching but Dream hadn’t come back to get him so maybe not as much time passed as he thought. A hand grasped his shoulder and George froze. Was it odd that he could immediately tell it wasn’t Dream? He half turned to face the person grabbing him and sure enough it wasn’t Dream. It was an older, taller looking man with a scar across his face and an eyepatch on his left eye. He was frowning and *damn* was he intimidating.

“Hey, you,” He began before pausing like he was considering what to say. He scowled, “You came with that stranger.”

George felt like a rock dropped in his stomach and he felt the moment he paled. He couldn’t help but think back to when he was getting attacked in his village and he bit his lip when his lips started to tremble despite himself. The man narrowed his eyes at George, obviously expecting an answer, but then a shadow fell across them and they both turned. George physically jolted and so did the man grasping his shoulder when Dream was suddenly just *there*, like almost up against the male

holding George's shoulder. He was towering over the guy, "Yeah, he's with me. Got a *problem*?"

Dream smirked then and it wasn't his usual one. This one was dangerous and still attractive somehow and it made George shiver. The other male, however, let go of George immediately, his face as white as chalk, and he stammered before basically racing out of the area. George didn't blame him. Dream leaned away and looked at him then, the malice completely gone from his face and posture, "You're such a magnet for trouble, Georgie~!"

"What?! N-No I'm not!" George denied, blushing at the strange nickname, "He was only asking me a question Dream..."

"He could have went about it differently," Dream frowned in the direction the man left before turning to George with a softer expression, "Let's go...the fish finished cooking and I was coming to get you."

"Alright but first...here," George smiled as he extended the hoodie towards Dream, "It's still a little wet but it's almost good as new!"

Dream took the hoodie and examined it before a true smile graced his face. It stole George's breath away for a moment, "Thank you, George."

"No problem," George said shyly, looking at the ground, "Let's go eat before we leave."

After they finished eating, George managed to redress the bandage around Dream's waist after making sure the infection was truly gone. The whole process was extremely awkward for George who found it hard not to stare at Dream's exposed and well-toned body. It made him want to gulp. It didn't help that Dream was staring at him the entire time. He just wasn't used to being so close to anyone.

Thankfully Dream didn't tease him though and they were able to pack their things after he was done before leaving and saddling on their horse. George was slowly starting to get used to being forced to be close to Dream as they rode forward. It didn't feel as awkward as before but every now again George's arm would come into contact with one of Dream's or he'd accidentally lean to far back and feel Dream's chest. If any of this bothered Dream then he didn't show it.

"We should be getting close," George spoke up, his eyes scanning the map that Dream had let him carry. George looked up and around. They'd entered a taiga biome about six minutes ago and he couldn't help but marvel at how tall the trees were.

"I agree," Dream hummed as he glanced over George's shoulder at the map, "Its going to get dark soon. I think we should make it there before it gets too dark though."

"Hopefully," George sighed, feeling a strange anxiety in his chest. He wasn't used to having to deal with mobs and the thought they could get surrounded at night if they weren't careful honestly

frightened him.

They rode on and for the next hour they chatted about random things, mostly about things they'd never seen before and then while George was in the middle of talking about the berry bushes they'd passed, Dream saw it. A huge taiga village sticking out on top of a mountain and various hills, "Oh my God!"

"What?" George asked, whirling his head to fix Dream with a confused stare.

"George, look!" Dream pointed upwards, "Its *there!* We made it!"

He watched George turn to look where he was pointing and a flattering beam crossed his face. Why was George so cute? "Yes! Awesome! Let's *go!*!"

"This is perfect, the sun is just starting to go down!" Dream grinned, looking away from George's face. He urged the horse to go faster up the trail but once they got closer to the entrance of the village he slowed down. Dream saw some stables to the right of the entrance and immediately urged the horse there. Once inside both he and George hopped off and Dream tied the horse down again. He turned and saw George waiting for him. He smiled.

"Do you know who were looking for here?" George asked slowly as they exited the stables and looked around. Once again, villagers close by were staring at them warily and curiously. Dream was thankful that his now dried hoodie showed no blood.

"I don't know his name. I just know its a male and he's a traveler. I was also told he was sort of a librarian?" Dream trailed off, unsure if he remembered that correctly. George gave him a look but then looked around.

"Guess we can start asking around about traveling librarians," George teased and Dream rolled his eyes. They walked further into the village side by side and Dream honestly wasn't sure who to talk to first. Everyone they passed watched them warily, curiously, or in some case fearfully. His mask wasn't *that* unsettling was it?

Before he could get too deep in his thoughts George left his side for a moment and approached someone to their left hesitantly, "Um, hi! I'm George and this is my friend, Dream."

Dream felt fond warmth spread through his chest. *Friend*. He was George's friend. He had to bite back a silly grin as the woman he was talking to roamed her eyes over George and then Dream himself, "Hi...I'm Alyssa..."

"Nice to meet you," George smiled, somewhat relieved, "Sorry to bother you. We're looking for

someone that might be a librarian...he might not be native to this village.”

The girl, Alyssa’s, eyes crinkled in confusion for a second before her eyes widened. She smiled slightly, in a polite way, “Ah, you must be talking about Bad.”

“Bad?” Both he and George parroted, confused by the name. Alyssa giggled at their simultaneous reaction.

“Yes. Bad isn’t from around *here* but he’s lived here for about a year now,” She explained before her voice got quieter, “He lives up on that hill alone.”

Dream glanced to where she was looking and saw that there was a hill behind two large houses. On top of the hill was a smaller secluded home. He turned back, “Thanks.”

“No problem,” She grinned as she looked at the two of them again, “Bye now.”

“Bye, thanks again,” George smiled and waved as Alyssa walked away, “That was easier than I thought.”

“Good thing he’s still here,” Dream nodded in agreement, “I wasn’t sure if he’d have left or not.”

“Well let’s go meet this Bad guy,” George joked and Dream chuckled despite himself. They ignored the looks they got as they walked past numerous houses and took the right path to go up the small hill.

The house was small and made of spruce logs and cobblestone. There was a single window to the right and light was spilling through but there was no one in sight as far as Dream could tell. Dream tapped on the door lightly as George fidgeted behind him. The sun was going down so Dream knew George was probably nervous about mobs showing up.

The door opened suddenly, startling both Dream and George. The man standing there was taller than George but shorter than Dream. He had brownish red messy hair and leafy green eyes, “What the....who are you two?”

“My name is Dream and this is George,” Dream introduced, eyeing the male warily, “Your name is Bad, right?”

“How’d you know that?” He asked, raising an eyebrow after glancing at both of them cautiously.

“Alyssa told us your name,” George butt in with a smile from around Dream's arm, “We’re looking for you cause...um...”

"I've been looking around for the pillagers that have crescent shaped tattoos," Dream explained briefly, "I heard that you were too."

And just like that, Bad's eyes slowly widened as he looked at Dream, "Oh my...wait, you...come in!"

He stammered and stumbled inside, clearly surprised. Dream followed him in cautiously, still not sure what to make of this guy. George followed behind him but didn't seem as wary as Dream was. He looked around in awe. Dream noted with growing affection that George didn't leave his side though.

The place was even smaller inside but there was a kitchen area with a furnace and smoker, a table, and off to the right side there were bookshelves filled with books. The man called Bad whirled around to face them with a look of strangled hope, "So...so you know about those pillagers? The ones with the crescent-shaped tattoos?!"

"Yes, I know of them," Dream nodded before his eyes widened when Bad beamed excitedly.

"You're the *only* other person I've met that knows who I've been talking about," He boomed as he bounced in place on his toes. That was kinda cute. George smiled at him.

"How do you know about them?" Dream questioned, tilting his head as he studied Bad. Something about the guy was completely harmless but one can't be so sure.

"They once attacked my home village," Bad paused, looking down solemnly, "Some people were taken...including my boyfriend..."

Dream's eyes widened and he jumped when George shouted, "*Boyfriend?!*"

Bad and Dream both looked at George in surprise for such a reaction and the smaller boy blushed, staring at the ground like that was a concept he never heard acknowledged in real life before. Dream chuckled briefly before placing a hand on George's head. Bad canted his head as he watched the two, "Yes...my boyfriend Skeppy was taken. He made sure I was hidden when our village was attacked. He said he'd come back for me once he found a safe place but he never came back."

"I'm sorry to hear that," Dream frowned and let his hand drop from George's head. There were more people being taken away by these pillagers? So it wasn't just his village that it happened at? Bad frowned sadly at the ground, "My village was also attacked by those pillagers. The ones with crescent-shaped tattoos."

Bad's face jerked up and he looked absolutely stunned, "What?!"

“They also took people,” Dream added before he felt his shoulders slump, “They took my best friend, Sapnap.”

“Oh my goodness,” Bad fretted as he fidgeted, “I’m sorry...that’s terrible! Are you and George from the same village then?”

Dream saw George tense, an anxious expression coming onto his face. Bad noticed it and blinked before looking guilty, “I’m sorry...”

“He’s not from the same village,” Dream explained as he watched George, “His village wasn’t attacked...”

“Oh,” Bad trailed off as he looked away from George to Dream. He changed the subject, “I’ve been trying the past year to find out where those pillagers could be...”

“So you don’t know either...” Dream sighed, crestfallen. He had so been hoping that when he met this guy, he’d have *some* sort of lead to go by. Bad looked briefly upset too.

“Well I think I’ve figured out one thing though,” Bad admitted hesitantly. Both George and Dream looked at him with wide eyes.

“What’s that?” George asked, daring himself to be hopeful.

“I think I found someone who knows about the crescent-shaped tattoo,” Bad explained as he looked serious, “If he knows about *that* then he might know about the pillagers who wear that tattoo. He might know what it means and why they take people.”

“Do you know who he is?” Dream demanded, his fingers already twitching to get into action. His heart began hammering, so there was some sort of lead after all. Dream felt so relieved he almost felt lightheaded.

“His name is Techno,” Bad answered with a small smile, “We’ve been exchanging letters for months and he’s finally agreed to meet me. He wants to meet me halfway by the human-shaped boulder that’s in the taiga forest an hour from here.”

“Never heard of a human-shaped boulder before,” George commented, tilting his head in a cute way.

“I’ve heard of it but never *seen* it,” Bad shrugged before his eyes lit up for some reason, “It’s weird that you guys found me now because I was due to leave first thing in the morning. Do you want to travel with me? You guys don’t seem like bad people at all.”

“If you don’t mind traveling with us,” Dream nodded, his heart finally calming down from his earlier excitement, “I’m so glad we have something to go on after all.”

Bad smiled, “It’s not much. It might not even tell us *anything* but I knew I had to learn more and at least try.”

“To be honest...I’m glad I met you two,” Bad added as he looked embarrassed, “I want to find Skeppy...but I can’t do this all on my own.”

Dream felt a funny jolt in his chest as he remembered George’s words when he agreed to come with him. He glanced at George. George was already looking at him, smiling like he knew what he was thinking of.

“We can all help each other!” George said cheerfully as he looked over at Bad, who brightened considerably.

“Yeah!” Bad cheered, throwing his hands up. His green eyes sparkled with excitement, “I need to finish packing my things for tomorrow then! Oh...”

“What is it?” Dream asked curiously when Bad blinked like he remembered something.

“You’re welcome to sleep here tonight but I don’t have any other beds for you guys,” Bad told them as he looked sheepish, “Sorry.”

“It’s okay. We have bedrolls,” George grinned as he patted his pack and Bad looked relieved.

“Oh good,” He said, smiling politely, “You can set them up upstairs in my bedroom.”

“Thanks Bad...” George replied with a genuine smile.

“Hey...can I ask about your name?” Dream pipped up and Bad rose an eyebrow at him, “No offense but who calls themselves ‘*Bad*’?”

“Oh...that’s just a nickname, Badboyhalo,” Bad snickered as he seemed to remember something, “I prefer to be called Bad.”

“I see,” Dream smirked and George rolled his eyes at how silly both their names sounded. What’s wrong with just calling yourself the name you were given?

After a minute passed Bad began pacing around the room, “Make yourselves at home you guys! I

have tons of things to get together.”

“Okay...” George trailed off, but unsure what to do. Dream also felt awkward just doing whatever he wanted in the house of a guy they just met. Bad blinked when neither male moved. Bad's eyes softened.

“You guys look like you’ve been through a lot,” Bad said sympathetically from where he stood bending over his desk by the bookshelves, “I have a working bathroom with a shower if you want to get cleaned up and more comfortable.”

George felt excitement building when heard that Bad had shower. Of course he had one in his *own* house but it'd already felt like it'd been too long since he'd been in a shower. He turned to Dream when Dream made a funny sound. Dream's eyes were wide behind his mask and his mouth open in shock, “A...a shower? Like a *real* one?”

Instant empathy was pooling inside George when he realized that Dream didn't really stay in villages. Villagers seemed to be too wary and scared of him. Not all village houses had working showers anyway, only the well-off ones did. It was apparent that Dream probably had to clean himself in random pools of water. The thought made him sad.

It appeared to make Bad sad too because he nodded, pursing his lips, “Yeah. It's heated water too.”

Dream brightened and George felt a small smile bloom on his face, “You should go first, Dream. I'll take one after you!”

“What...really?” Dream gasped as he turned to George and then when he realized how he was acting, Dream actually flushed a bit, “Uh...sure, I'll go first.”

“Its upstairs,” Bad smiled gently, “There's a small room off to the side.”

“Thanks,” Dream grinned, the look of excitement returning. He took off in the direction of the stairs just behind the kitchen and George silently followed him. He needed to set up their bedrolls anyway.

The bedroom was small and there was a adjoining room that was just as small. There was a single white bed and a double chest on both sides of it. It was rather simple but George didn't mind. Dream set his things in the corner by the bathroom and started rummaging through his bag while George began unrolling the leather bed rolls.

“I'll be right back,” Dream spoke up and George looked over at him. Dream seemed so happy for just a shower. George bit back a frown and instead smiled, nodding his head. Dream vanished in the bathroom and George giggled when he heard the water turn on immediately.

“George?”

George whirled around to look behind him. Bad was coming into the room with a curious expression on his face. He had a large backpack over his shoulder, “I hope I don’t sound insensitive but I was just wondering...do you need some spare clothes?”

“Oh,” George blinked before blushing with the realization that he was still wearing *Dream*’s other hoodie. He probably smelled from not being able to bathe in awhile too, “A-Actually yeah...”

“No problem,” Bad brightened and he went towards one of the double chests by the bed, rummaging for a second before returning with a pile of clothes, “I actually don’t wear these...its silly but I don’t really like wearing clothes other than black or red.”

“Really?” George asked, slightly amused as Bad sat with him on the floor and dropped the clothes in front of him. Bad nodded, grinning.

“I think these would look better on you,” Bad commented as he gestured to the clothes. George blinked over at him before grabbing the blue fabric he saw, “I noticed you and Dream seem to like hoodies....right?”

“Y-Yeah,” George nodded, feeling somewhat embarrassed for some reason. He recognized the blue fabric as a blue hoodie. He turned it over in his hands and noted a strange brownish and white box logo on the front, “Is that red?”

“Uh...yeah it’s red,” Bad answered him, sounding confused.

“I thought so,” George laughed as Bad tilted his head at him, “I’m colorblind and can’t really see red or green colors.”

“Oh! I’m sorry,” Bad apologized like he’d insulted George. How kind-hearted *was* this guy? George smiled, amused again.

“There’s nothing to be sorry for. I just wanted to make sure this was actually red,” George grinned and once Bad saw he wasn’t insulted he smiled brightly. George glanced at the hoodie. It was smaller than Dream’s hoodie so it might actually fit him instead of dwarfing him like Dream’s hoodie did. He found that he was falling in love with the sky blue color of the hoodie and the simple design. He was never one for extravagant things.

“Thanks Bad!” George beamed as he hugged the hoodie to himself, “I actually really like this!”

“Well I’m glad,” Bad chuckled and he stood slowly, “I’m gonna step out for a few things, okay?”

“Alright,” George nodded and Bad left the room. George glanced at the other clothes and pawed through them. He saw some faded blue jeans and smiled. That’d be perfect. There weren’t any rips in them either!

He left the other clothes that he didn’t pick on Bad’s bed, not wanting to assume where he liked to put his things. George also didn’t want to seem like he was going through Bad’s things. After he did that he resumed straightening and fixing his and Dream’s bed rolls.

George was so distracted during this that he didn’t notice Dream stepping out of the bathroom and come closer to him. He jumped when Dream spoke up, “I’m done, George.”

He quickly glanced over to see Dream still wearing his favorite lime green hoodie, or that’s what George assumed was the color. It was so hard to tell. Dream was also still wearing that smiley-faced mask and black jeans. He felt briefly disappointed for some reason when he saw the mask. George assumed Dream would have it off for a moment at least.

“You okay?” Dream asked as he tilted his head and George’s eyes widened when he realized he was staring Dream down. George felt his face explode with color and Dream’s own eyes widened before he laughed that wheezing laugh, “What the hell, George?”

“It-It’s nothing!” George stammered, feeling ready to sink in the floor. He hurriedly gathered his new clothes and rushed into the bathroom to the sound of Dream still wheezing. He closed the door and leaned against it for a moment, taking a breath.

Instead of thinking about his reaction to Dream, George let his eyes wander the small bathroom. It was small enough that only one person could fit inside it but that was fine. There was a toilet off to the side and in the back of the small room was the shower, shielded by dark-tinted glass doors. George set his clothes aside and hoped Dream left him enough hot water.

Dream hummed to himself, pleased, as he sat crisscross on his bedroll. He was double-checking his belongings and attempting to organize them. He was pretty sure George was staring him down earlier. The thought made him feel warm. George blushed harder than he’d ever seen so far and that was so amusing. The blush had contrasted prettily against George’s pale creamy skin.

Dream blinked, freezing as he considered his train of thought. That’s not the way one would normally think of a friend, right? Dream certainly never thought about Sapnap blushing and all that crap. Dream looked down at his hands. He liked seeing George blush, he liked making him blush.

“Well, that’s new,” Dream muttered out loud in surprise. Before he could think about it more he heard the water in the bathroom cut off and he scrambled to rummage through his bag to appear busy so that way George didn’t notice the somewhat stupefied expression on his face. Not that he could see much behind his mask anyway.

“I never thought I’d miss hot water so much,” George laughed and Dream’s mouth twitched into a smile. George’s laugh sometimes sounded more like a gasp and it was pretty amusing. Dream glanced up at George and his breath caught in his throat.

George was wearing a sky blue hoodie that actually framed him just right with a red and white boxed logo on the front. The faded jeans complimented both the hoodie and his pale skin just right. George’s dark brown hair was always sort of messy, sticking up near his ears in a really cute way. Dream glanced up into George’s warm chocolate brown eyes and realized he thought George was really cute. Like *really* really cute.

“Dream?” George tilted his head, raising an eyebrow in confusion and Dream realized not only was he staring but he never said anything back to George’s comment.

“You think *you* missed hot water,” Dream laughed softly, “I haven’t had a hot shower in *years!*”

“Ew,” George joked, his nose wrinkling in a cute way. Dream’s heart skipped a beat but he rolled his eyes playfully.

“I’ve kept myself clean just fine though,” Dream retorted, shrugging.

“I don’t see *how*,” George teased as he sat on his bedroll beside Dream. Dream chose not to tease back mainly because he was now curious.

“Where’d you get that hoodie?” He questioned, staring at the way the hoodie hugged George’s slim waist.

“Oh, Bad gave me some clothes he doesn’t wear,” George grinned as he looked down at the hoodie himself, “I really like it. I’ve never really been one to care much about what I wore but this is amazing.”

“It looks great on you,” Dream smirked and was pleased when George blushed pink, his eyes widening.

“Really...?” George asked shyly and Dream nodded, almost a little too quickly. George smiled, “Thanks!”

“Sure,” Dream grinned. It went silent for a minute as they both just sat there, lost in their own thoughts.

“Hey...what do you think about Bad?” George wondered as he glanced at Dream.

“Bad seems pretty kind actually. I don't feel any dangerous vibes from him,” Dream answered as he looked back at George thoughtfully, “He might just be reliable. He’s also kinda innocent like you.”

“Innocent?” George’s brow furrowed and Dream chuckled.

“Pure-hearted. Hardly a mean bone in their body,” Dream clarified and was rewarded another light pink blush from George.

“Maybe yes for Bad but you don’t know me that well Dream,” George denied as he puffed out his lips in a pout.

“Not yet,” Dream blurted, sounding much more flirty than he meant to. George looked over at him with an eyebrow raised and Dream chuckled, almost nervously, “I can still tell. You’re not mean, George.”

George grinned, “Well, it depends on the person I guess.”

They heard a noise downstairs and Dream tensed for a split second before realizing it was just Bad. He didn’t know the other male even *left*. Bad came up the steps and smiled at them cheerfully, “Hi guys!”

“Hey,” George chuckled at the arm-full of stuff Bad was carrying. Bad sat down close to them, setting down his pack and putting everything in his arms on the floor. George's eyes lit up and he gasped, “Oh, you have a sword!”

Bad jumped at George’s gasp before nodding as he held it up for them to see, “It’s nothing fancy. Just an iron sword for self defense.”

“I wish I had one,” George sighed in disappointment. Dream blinked over at him while Bad smiled gently.

“I can pick you up one before we leave tomorrow,” Bad claimed as both Dream and George looked at him in surprise, “The blacksmith already closed for the night but he wouldn’t mind giving me just one more tomorrow morning.”

“Really?” George gasped again, feeling delighted. Bad watched how Dream stared at George then and rose an eyebrow.

“Yeah, for sure,” Bad answered as he tore his eyes away from Dream to smile at George. George’s whole face brightened.

“Awesome! I’ve never had anything other than stone tools before!” George exclaimed as he closed his eyes, feeling giddy. Dream felt an odd pang at that.

“I also have a bow and some arrows,” Bad added as he glanced down, sorting all his things, “I prefer to use those because I’m not that great at close-combat. I prefer not fighting if there’s any way around it anyway.”

Dream hummed in interest, not surprised given Bad’s character so far, and then turned to George. He remembered that George said he knew how to use a sword but how well was that?

“George, do you have any fighting experience?” Dream asked as he studied the smaller male. George opened his eyes in surprise before looking down, somewhat embarrassed.

“I’ve killed a few zombies and a couple of skeletons before...but not in groups,” George admitted, “I’m not great with a sword or anything because I didn’t have much cause to use it before.”

Dream smiled slightly, “I see. I can teach you some things I know as we travel, if you want.”

“Really?!” George asked excitedly and Dream nodded, glad his mask could hide his blush, “Thanks Dream!”

“No problem,” Dream grinned before he noticed Bad staring at them with an expression he couldn’t make out, “What...?”

“Huh? Oh, *sorry!*” Bad blushed when he realized he’d been watching them too closely, “I was just spacing out.”

George and Dream both chuckled as Bad hurriedly started rummaging through his stuff again. Dream noticed something in the male’s pile of supplies, “Is that stained glass?”

“What?” Bad’s head came up, his expression confused before he looked back down to see the large pieces black stained glass he had, “Oh, yeah it is. I wasn’t planning to do anything with it and I wasn’t going to take it with me. It’s just some more junk I have.”

“Can I have it then?” Dream asked, staring at the dark black-stained glass. An idea was forming in his head as he stared at it.

“What do you want black glass for?” George asked, looking just as lost as Bad. Dream chuckled.

“That’s a secret,” He grinned and George just cocked an eyebrow before shrugging. Bad blinked when Dream looked over at him expectantly.

“Oh, well if you really want it then sure,” Bad laughed, handing over the large pieces of glass to Dream. Dream immediately packed it away in his pack for later use.

The three of them continued talking as they settled down and Bad finished packing. They learned a little more about Bad, like the fact that he was actually older than them at twenty-five years old, and he had an odd mannerism of saying *muffin* instead of curse words. Bad claimed to hate curse words.

“That’s kinda weird, Bad,” George giggled after Dream had repeatedly said ‘shit’ just to tease Bad. Dream found that was almost as fun as making George blush.

“No, its *not*!” Bad cried as his mouth formed a pout, “I never expected you two to have such foul mouths!”

George and Dream burst out laughing, deciding that they really liked Badboyhalo. Bad felt his mouth wobble, he couldn’t even pretend to stay mad at these two muffin-heads. As his laughter died down, Dream noted how dark it was outside, “We should probably get some sleep now if we want to be as productive as possible tomorrow.”

Bad nodded while George yawned, “Yeah, goodnight guys!”

“Goodnight Dream, goodnight Bad,” George replied tiredly as he shifted to lay down in his bedroll. Dream did the same as Bad stood up and jumped into his bed. Dream looked at George one last time and smiled warmly before closing his eyes and letting sleep take hold of him.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Hey! I hope you all are doing okay! I'm so happy with all your comments! They urge me to write as much as I can!

I hope to update at least once a week! I might be getting busy soon though...anyways have fun reading!

"So...how long have you guys known each other?" Bad asked as he urged his own horse to keep up with Dream's. He kept glancing at the two, studying the way they interacted with each other.

"Huh?" Dream narrowed his eyes over at Bad, confused for a split second. George also looked at Bad in confusion. It'd been silent for several minutes before anyone spoke so the sudden question surprised them, "Oh...well we've known each other for a few days..."

"What?!" Bad squawked, his eyes widening. Dream rose an eyebrow at him and George jumped from Bad's reaction, "You guys act like you've been friends for *years*!"

Dream laughed, slightly wheezing, "I dunno I guess we just get along well."

"It's weird but true," George agreed, smiling slightly. Bad blinked at them, staring hard. George looked over at Bad, meeting his green eyes, "Besides, we just met *you* last night but I feel totally comfortable with you!"

"H-huh...?" Bad blushed out of embarrassment before he realized he felt the same about the two males. Dream did feel kinda dangerous but Bad didn't feel like Dream would hurt him. He felt comfortable around both Dream and George, "I feel the same about you guys!"

"Even me?" Dream smirked, quirked a brow in surprise. Bad nodded, "I don't hear that very often."

He was laughing slightly as he said it but both George and Bad frowned anyways. George smiled, "I don't either..."

Dream's hands tightened on the horse's reins at the small reminder that George hardly experienced kindness before he met Dream. Scowling hard, Dream tried to keep from grinding his teeth together.

"Hey Bad?" George questioned hesitantly, not noticing Dream's reaction to what he said earlier. Bad glanced over at him questioningly, "Can...can I ask you something?"

"Sure George," Bad nodded.

"What's your boyfriend, Skeppy, like?" George asked and Bad felt a pang in his chest at the mention of his lover, "I'm just curious so you don't have to tell me if you don't want to..."

"I..." Bad trailed off, biting his lip. It's not like he didn't like talking about Skeppy, it just hurt to do so. He missed him so much, "Well he likes to try and scare or trick me sometimes. He's a real prankster but he also knows when to be serious with me, like he knows the limits to teasing me. He's-"

George and even Dream were watching him as he talked, both were pretty curious after all. Dream was so distracted by Bad that he didn't see the arrow shooting towards them until it was too late. An arrow soared through the air and hit Dream's horse near it's neck, nearly scrapping George's leg in the process. The horse cried out as all three males gasped almost in unison. Dream's hand was already going for his sword when the horse bucked wildly, sending an unstable George and Dream to the ground.

Dream gasped and narrowly rolled out of the way of the horse's back hooves stomping down into the ground. Bad was already hopping off his horse and pulling out his bow, aiming an arrow into the woods. George quickly jumped to his feet, nearly a beat behind Dream as they glanced into the woods where Bad was aiming. A pearl of white flashed in the shadows under the trees for a moment and George choked on his breath.

"Skeleton..." He trailed off as he pulled out the iron sword Bad had gotten him from the blacksmith that morning. Bad was already unleashing arrows towards the skeleton as Dream rushed forward, skillfully maneuvering so he wasn't in Bad's way. Suddenly George realized how inexperienced he was compared to the other two males. He glanced at Bad, stunned to see a cold scowl on the normally cheerful male's face as he docked another arrow.

"George!" Dream warned and George flinched out of his daze, barely ducking out of the way of an arrow in time. In the distraction, Bad shot an arrow right into one of the skeleton's ribs. It didn't flinch or pause in it's movements in any way. Then it aimed it's arrow at Bad instead of Dream or George.

Dream was one step ahead and as he reached within range, he decapitated the skeleton with a single stroke of his sword before it could fire the arrow. The skeleton fell lifelessly on the ground and Dream immediately looked around to make sure there were no more mobs hidden within the shadows.

"Figures there'd be a skeleton hiding in the safety of shadows," Bad scoffed and George looked at him, still shocked, "Too bad we're in the woods or we could have just pushed it out into sunlight so it could burn."

"Y-Yeah..." George stammered before glancing over his shoulder. His eyes widened further, "Oh *no!*"

"What is it?!" Dream zoomed over towards him and Bad at George's cry, surprising them both with his speed. George met Dream's gaze.

"T-The horses ran off during the fight," George told him as he looked around wildly, "I was so shocked I didn't even *notice* it!"

Dream's eyes widened as he looked around as well, noticing Bad and his own horse were long gone, having raced away out of fright without anything to tie them down. Bad groaned and Dream cursed loudly. Bad sent him a scolding look, "Language Dream!"

"This is fucking...*ugh!*" Dream groaned, a hand on his mask. Bad fumed that Dream ignored him and George felt a cold pang of guilt.

"Sorry Dream...I got so distracted and surprised," George sighed as his shoulders slumped heavily. Bad and Dream looked at him in surprise, "You both were actually fighting well and I was just there. If I were paying attention I could have stopped the horses from running."

Dream frowned at the narrowed look of self-hatred on George's face. He stepped closer to George and placed a hand on his shoulder before speaking to him soothingly, "It's not your fault, George. The skeleton came out of nowhere and you aren't used to this. It's normal to get shocked."

"Dream's right!" Bad grinned as he walked towards them. George looked at them hesitantly, "You don't just get good or used to this in one day! You reacted pretty well George."

"Still...I could have been more useful," George frowned, before looking determined at the two other males, "I'll do better next time!"

"Yeah you will," Dream smiled at him warmly and George felt his heart skip a beat in his chest. Dream dropped his hand from George's shoulder and turned to Bad, "Good thing we didn't actually have our things strapped to the horses."

"True. We all have our packs on us," Bad hummed before looking troubled, "But now we'll be a bit late in meeting Techno. I hope he doesn't bail."

"He better not," Dream scowled, crossing his arms. It was quiet for a moment before he sighed, "Well, looks like we're going on foot. Lead the way, Bad."

"Sure, we better hurry," Bad smiled as he immediately walked away. George noted that Bad didn't

put away his bow so he decided to keep his sword in his hand too. He blinked when he noticed Dream walking directly by his side. Things were peaceful and quiet for a while but all three males were still on edge, constantly peering around the trees for hidden mobs. Eventually George's legs began to ache with how long they'd been walking.

"So this Techno can be trusted, right Bad?" George asked, breaking the silence. Bad looked over at his shoulder, "Do you know much about him?"

"Well, I don't know a whole *lot* about him," Bad confessed, looking sheepish and Dream frowned, "I only know he's the leader of his territory. It's supposedly one of the *biggest* villages in the world, practically a whole town or city!"

"Really?" Dream gasped, his eyes widening behind his mask, "I've never seen something like that in all my years."

"Me either," Bad shrugged, "I've only *read* about such places. Techno is very responsible from what I know and he's apparently a really fierce warrior. He's risen to the top with purely his own skills."

"He sounds like a king or something," George chuckled at the image in his head. Bad laughed and Dream cocked an eyebrow.

"He probably *is* in his territory," Bad admitted as he glanced up at the sky in thought, "I only started to write to him because I was told to write to the leader of that town. To be honest, I was surprised he actually replied to me."

"I'm more surprised that such a person is meeting us by himself," Dream muttered, his eyes narrowing in suspicion, "Are you *sure* we can trust him?"

"Yes, I'm pretty sure," Bad smiled gently, "He keeps up his guard with me even in letters but Techno doesn't break agreements once he makes them."

"I trust you, Bad," George grinned when Bad blushed slightly at his comment, "I don't think this Techno guy will try anything bad. What do you think Dream?"

"I trust Bad too," Dream nodded, smiling at the way George asked him for his thoughts, "Even if Techno tries anything, I'll just stop him."

"You're so confident," Bad muttered, rolling his eyes at Dream, who chuckled.

As they continued, they kept talking until they got to a large inclined hill. Climbing up it wasn't a challenge for the three males but Dream surprised them by grinning and shouting, "First one to the

top wins!"

"Wha-?!" George cut his shout short when Dream started racing forward. He laughed despite himself and immediately pushed himself into a run. Bad gasped at the two.

"How *old* are you!?" Bad shouted after them as he also took off running. His shout made George and Dream laugh loudly. At one point Dream almost tripped on a raised root which let George take the lead. George snickered loudly as he passed Dream. The taller male only wheezed slightly at what happened before quickly chasing after George. Just as George made it to the top, he felt Dream grab his sleeve to try and pull himself ahead of the smaller male.

He gasped, "Dream, *stop*!" Dream wheezed again.

"No," He laughed as they both stopped for a split second, breathing hard. George scowled over at Dream as he was still grabbing onto his sleeve. George tried to shake him off.

"I won fair and square Dream," George grinned. Dream's grip tightened on his sleeve.

"We got here at the same time. It was a tie," Dream grinned in return and then laughed once when George squawked.

"What?! No you...you grabbed my sleeve! You were *behind* me!" George protested as he scowled at the taller male.

"Nope, we got to the top at the same time Georgie~" Dream hummed as he smirked down at the smaller boy, "It's a tie!"

"You're actually a *liar*, Dream," George sighed, closing his eyes and Dream chuckled. They both heard heavy breathing and turned to see Bad carefully climbing to the top to join them.

"You guys are insane," Bad pouted as he pulled himself up. He gave the two other boys a look, "Who won by the way?"

George groaned loudly when Dream laughed, "It was a tie!"

"No it wasn't!"

"I didn't know you were so competitive Georgie," Dream teased and for the first time since they met, George was actually getting annoyed with Dream.

"*I'm* competitive?! You...you know what?" George growled as he tried to pull his sleeve away from

Dream again to no avail. He walked a couple of steps away, "Let go Dream!"

"Ah, wait George-"

George didn't listen and when he took another step back, the ground suddenly felt muddy and he gasped when he slipped in the dirt, falling down the hill. Dream yelped and held onto George to try and pull him back. Before he realized what was happening, George felt arms wrap around his chest and suddenly he was sliding down the other side of the hill with a sharp gasp. When all movement stopped, he opened his eyes wondering when he even closed them. He was surprised that sliding down the hill hadn't hurt. Then he realized something warm was wrapped behind him.

"Are you muffins okay?!" Bad yelled from the top of the hill and George's eyes widened when he looked to the side, meeting Dream's shocked gaze behind his mask. To his embarrassment, George found that Dream must have tried to help him but slipped with him. Dream's arms were wrapped around George's chest and George was pulled close to the other boy which means that Dream took the brunt of sliding down the hill.

"Dream!" George gasped, shuffling to move to face him better, "What the... are you okay?"

Dream suddenly threw back his head and laughed, practically wheezing, "Yeah, yeah I'm fine!"

George couldn't help but smile at his friend when he noticed how bright Dream's laughter was. His expression was also so happy. They heard Bad rushing down the hill and George turned his gaze to his other friend.

"You gave me a *heart* attack!" Bad shouted, looking annoyed, "Dream, you're okay right? I saw you grab George but did you guys hit your head or anything?!"

Dream was still laughing which caused George to chuckle, "Sorry Bad. We're okay and we didn't hit our head. We're just muddy now."

Bad sighed in relief before raising an eyebrow with a smile, "You know, Dream, you laugh a *lot*."

"I'm finding that out too," George chuckled before realizing he was still in Dream's arms, pulled close. He blushed slightly, "He's also very touchy-feely."

Dream's laughter finally died down to chuckles as he looked at George with a smile, "You like it though."

"Who says?" George dead-panned despite feeling a jump in his chest from Dream's words. How did Dream manage to sound so confident all the time? "Can you let me go now?"

"Fine, fine," Dream chuckled again as Bad laughed at the two. Dream withdrew his hands, though his fingers accidentally brushed against George's sides and George gasped, unable to help himself. Dream rose an eyebrow, "Are you ticklish George?"

"N-No," George stammered and then paled when Dream smirked, "Dream, *no*. I swear to God I will burn your favorite hoodie!"

For some reason both Bad and Dream started laughing loudly. Bad bent over from his laughter while Dream laughed out, "You'd have to strip me while I sleep to get it but okay."

"I swear...you're so...ugh!" George growled in frustration as he slowly stood, shuffling to put some distance away from Dream when Dream also stood up. He frowned, "Let's go already!"

Dream laughed softly when George started walking off and immediately made to follow him. Bad followed as well, his laughter dying off as he grinned, "You two muffins sure are something else."

"I know," Dream snickered before throwing a friendly arm around Bad's neck, "You're quite a character too Bad."

"I'll take that as a compliment," Bad smiled as he continued teasingly, "George was right though, you are a very touchy-feely person. I'm the same to be honest so it doesn't bother me."

Dream shrugged and withdrew his arm from Bad, staring at the back of George's head. George looked over his shoulder at the two, surprised when he met Dream's eyes. He quickly whirled his head around. The taller male jogged to be at George's side and chuckled, "Sorry, George. You're not mad, are you? I won't tickle you."

George glanced at Dream, who smiled brightly at him. George sighed, feeling the annoyance dissipate, "I'm not mad. And you better not tickle me. Seriously. "

Dream chuckled deeply, "I won't."

"Hey I think we're getting close," Bad spoke up loudly as he joined Dream's other side, squinting ahead of them before pulling out Dream's map, "We'll probably be at the human-shaped boulder in another twenty or so minutes."

"Well that's good," George sighed in relief before noticing Dream tense slightly. He rose an eyebrow at the taller male, but Dream wasn't looking at him. He was looking around seriously, as if keeping watch for a threat. George realized that Dream was very wary of meeting this Techno guy. He noticed Dream's hands twitching a bit, like they were ready to pull Dream's sword out at any time.

"Hey, don't worry Dream," George smiled soothingly, putting a hand on Dream's right arm. Dream blinked over at him in surprise, "You don't have to be so tense. Bad and I are with you."

Bad smiled brightly as if to affirm this fact and Dream smiled warmly, looking at George fondly as he nodded, "I know. I'm just being prepared."

Something about Dream's expression made his stomach flop again and George looked away to eye the ground, his cheeks heating up a bit. He tried not to smile when he felt Dream's gaze on him. After a few minutes of walking in silence, George looked up from the ground when Bad cleared his throat, "So...I've been wondering about something..."

"What's that Bad?" Dream asked as he peered at him. Bad hesitated.

"Well I was just wondering, and you don't have to tell me anything, but I was curious...where do you come from George?" Bad questioned almost shyly, looking over at the smaller male. George almost faltered in his next step and his eyes widened, "I know you're not from the same village as Dream and your village wasn't attacked like ours..."

"Yeah..." George whispered, ducking his head back down to stare at the ground. He didn't see how Dream's hands clenched into fists, "I'm from a village in the plains close to where you were at Bad."

Bad's eyes widened, "Oh really?" Then Bad frowned, biting his lip, "You...why did you leave?"

Memories flashed through George's mind and he clenched his teeth together. He was so engrossed in his thoughts that he jumped when he felt a hand on his head. He glanced up to see Dream frowning at him before Dream looked over at Bad.

"The villagers attacked him because he helped me. I made him leave with me after that," Dream explained as Bad froze, his eyes going wide.

"They *attacked* you?! What in the world?" Bad exclaimed as he looked briefly angry. George rubbed one of his arms with his hand, not knowing what to say. He barely nodded, still aware of Dream's hand on his head.

"It was a long time coming," George sighed bitterly and he must have imagined the suppressed growl he heard from Dream, "They *never* liked me. Seeing me helping Dream was their excuse to be hostile. I guess I never noticed before how much they wanted me gone."

Dream dropped his hand from George's head before he did damage to the smaller male. His chest burned with anger as he remembered the villagers from George's village. The slight pain he heard in George's voice made him want to kill those villagers without a second thought. He took a deep breath to calm himself.

Bad felt himself pale, "I'm so sorry for bringing it back up, George...."

"It's okay Bad," George made those memories drift off as he smiled at the good-natured male at Dream's other side, "It's natural to be curious. Can I ask you something now?"

"Anything you want!" Bad nodded a little too quickly and George chuckled. Dream felt himself beginning to relax, his fingers almost shaking with how hard he'd clenched them into fists.

"How long have you known Skeppy?" George asked softly.

"We grew up together...so all our lives!" Bad laughed, surprised that he didn't feel the usual pang that came when he talked about his missing lover.

"That's so nice," George grinned, but felt a familiar pang of jealousy. Dream and Bad both had childhood friends they cared so much about. George had no one like that, "When did he become your boyfriend?"

Bad blinked before smiling affectionately, "We got together two years ago. We kind of danced around our feelings especially since a lot of people in our village didn't approve of how close we were."

"They didn't approve?" Dream rose an eyebrow, "Because you're both guys or...?"

"Yeah because we're both men," Bad frowned at the ground before he brightened slightly, "That didn't bother *us* though! Our parents don't...well *didn't* care that we loved each other..."

"I've never seen two men together," George spoke up shyly and blushed slightly when Bad and Dream looked at him, "Is it common?"

"I don't know...I *don't* think so," Dream trailed off before smiling, "People from *my* village were super accepting of it though. We had a two gay couples living there at the time."

"Oh..." George replied, wondering why his heart started fluttering. He suddenly felt very shy.

"Well I'm glad it was like that for you Dream," Bad giggled as he beamed, "We need more supportive people in the world!"

"For sure..." Dream muttered as he stuck his hands in the pockets of his hoodie. The wind was picking up slightly, making the temperature drop a little.

The three continued chatting contently for a few more minutes before they noticed a flat opening in the distance. Bad gasped, "That's it!"

Bad dashed off, surprising the other two, who immediately followed the other male. As they burst through the opening, the first thing they saw was a huge boulder.

"What do you know..." George trailed off in wonder as they all looked around, "It *is* human-shaped!"

The clearing was small, in a circle-like shape, surrounded by the tall taiga trees of the forest. The human-shaped boulder took up the center of the clearing. It was just barely shaped like a human with no obvious markers of gender.

"This is amazing!" Bad beamed, sharing a smile with George as they both studied the boulder with awe.

Dream smiled at them both before glancing around. His face dropped immediately behind his mask when something shifted along the shadows of the trees. There was something *in* the trees. Not wasting a moment, Dream rushed forward, grabbed Bad and George, and shoved all three of them to the ground. Bad and George gasped as they were thrust to the ground with Dream hovering over them protectively. He already had his sword out as he glared daggers into the shadows of the trees.

"Dream, what is it?" George whispered, feeling goosebumps rising on his skin from Dream's violent reaction.

"Is it Techno?" Bad also whispered, his eyes widening as he looked where Dream was staring. Dream didn't answer them, his eyes rooted to that one spot in the shadows.

It was silent for a moment too long before an unfamiliar voice called into the clearing, "You are quite skilled to notice my slight movement while I was hidden."

Dream tensed when the shadow jumped from the tree to land in view a few yards away from them. Bad and George's eyes widened as they, along with Dream, studied the man.

He had long bubble-gum pink hair that was loosely tied into a ponytail close to the tips. The startling thing about him was the thick golden crown on his head that was slightly encrusted with jewels and the pig-faced mask that was dark pink with white tusks on the sides that covered the man's eyes and nose; even more startling was the majestic red cape that settled on his shoulders.

"I wasn't expecting more than one person. Which one of you is Badboyhalo?" The man cocked an eyebrow, sounding naturally monotone. His expression was almost blank, "Or are you three random travelers?"

"I'm Badboyhalo!" Bad boomed as he raised a hand from behind Dream. George was surprised that Dream still had his sword extended, "You are Technoblade, right?"

"Technoblade?" George parroted, completely thrown off by yet another strange name. Techno had been a weird enough name on its own. Dream also quirked a brow at the name but said nothing, his eyes never leaving the strange male.

"Ah, yes that's me. So you are Badboyhalo," Techno said as he studied Bad. Then his brown eyes settled on Dream, "You didn't tell me you were bringing others."

"Sorry about that," Bad laughed, completely relaxed for someone meeting a stranger for the first time in person. George gaped at him as Bad nudged himself around Dream. Dream tensed and frowned but let Bad maneuver around him to be in view. Bad gestured to Dream and George, "These guys are my friends. I asked them to travel with me because they have the same goals as me!"

Techno's eyes lit up in interest as he scanned Dream and George, "I see. And what are your names?"

"I'm George..." George trailed off as he slowly stood but remained behind Dream. George glanced at Dream when he remained silent, "That's Dream."

"Interesting," Techno hummed though his expression was still blank and how on *earth* did he manage to make everything he say sound so monotone? George felt stupefied by the guy, "Where did you learn to fight?"

All three males were taken off guard by the random question and Dream realized that Techno was staring at him, "I taught myself...trail and error."

To Dream's surprise, part of Techno's mouth quirked in a small smile before it was gone, "I see. Much the same for me. You do not have to be so on guard with me."

"Sure..." Dream replied but he kept his sword out. He rested it against his shoulder instead of pointing it though. George wondered if that was comfortable.

"Actually Techno...Dream's in the same situation as me," Bad spoke up and Techno looked at him, "He's looking for the same pillagers as me. He had a friend stolen from him."

"I figured it might be like that," Techno nodded, not even looking surprised, "My condolences."

Dream didn't answer that and frowned, "Bad said that you know about the crescent-shaped

tattoo...?"

"A little bit," Techno nodded as he crossed his arms, "It's a symbol meant to represent those who worship the Ender Dragon."

"*Excuse* me?" George gasped, his mouth falling open. Dream's eyes widened and Bad also gasped, his eyes widening as well, "Isn't the Ender Dragon just a myth?"

"Could not tell you for sure," Techno shrugged his shoulders as he looked thoughtful, "No one's ever come back alive when they try to find it in the End yet the records in books and scrolls say the End and the Ender Dragon are real."

"Why would those pillagers use that tattoo?" Bad muttered as his brow furrowed, "Does that mean *they* are worshippers of the Ender Dragon?"

"Possibly," Techno nodded and all three males tensed as he continued, "When you began writing me, Bad, I looked into those pillagers. They are not well known because everywhere they pillage they leave no one alive and survivors are taken. You and Dream must have been lucky."

Dream glared at Techno, "I wouldn't call *that* lucky."

"I wouldn't either," Bad said softly, bowing his head. George frowned.

"If they *are* Ender Dragon worshippers...then why take people?" George asked hesitantly, fear growing in his chest, "They aren't...like...*sacrificing* them are they?"

Bad and Dream both paled, their eyes round with shock. Techno didn't react at all, his face still blank as he turned to George, "That...*might* be possible since you don't hear about these pillagers from anyone...it must mean no one ever escapes them."

"No...n-no," Bad shook his head, feeling panic rushing forward. Techno let his blank expression slip for a second in sympathy.

"That might not be the case though," Techno soothed and all three male's whipped their heads up to stare at him, "Like I said...when you started sending me letters I started investigating. I did not find out much, however, I *have* heard a troublesome rumor. I still have trusted aides looking into it. I am not sure if this has anything to do with those pillagers though."

"What rumor?" Dream asked, frowning.

"There's rumors floating around that there are people stuck in the nether," Techno answered and he

looked doubtful for once, "I am unsure the level of truth behind these rumors. As I said, however, I have trustworthy people investigating."

"People stuck in the nether?" Bad gasped, paling, "The nether is the worst place in the world to be stuck at!"

"I agree," Dream nodded, his eyes narrowed, "It's been described as literal hell."

"Indeed," Techno agreed as he hummed, "There's something else about that crescent-shaped tattoo...but it's a story that's been changed a lot over time."

"What's the story?" George asked quietly, glancing between Bad and Dream.

"Legend says that those marked with the crescent-shaped tattoo, the worshippers of the Ender Dragon, have been trying for centuries to bring the Ender Dragon to the overworld."

"*What?!*" Dream cried out, shocked. His voice rose a couple of octaves, "That's the *stupidest* thing I've ever heard! No one even knows if the Ender Dragon is real! It's just a bunch of legends and stories!"

"Yeah and people die all the time trying to find out if it *is* real," Bad added, scowling, "If it is real...then the legends would be true. If it's *real*...why would they want to bring it here?"

"According to legend, the worshippers believe the Ender Dragon was meant to rule the overworld," Techno sighed, shaking his head, "Those who worship the Ender Dragon are not sane."

"Obviously," George snorted, unable to believe what he was hearing. As if the Ender Dragon, *if* real, would let anything or anyone live.

"So if that's what legend says about the crescent-shaped tattoo, does that mean these pillagers are worshippers who want to bring the Ender Dragon to the overworld?" Bad asked as he scratched his arm, "It still doesn't explain why they'd take people for something like that."

"I am unsure of that myself," Techno frowned.

"I find it hard to believe those savages are slaughtering and kidnapping people to try and bring an Ender Dragon to the overworld," Dream ground out, his hands curling into fists, "How do they expect to do such a thing even if it *is* real?"

"That's the part that no one knows," Techno answered calmly, "I am afraid this is all I know about the subject."

"Thank you, Techno," Bad said quietly as he smiled weakly to the crowned individual, "Do you have any idea where this group of pillagers might be?"

"No, I am sorry," Techno frowned again, actually looking sympathetic, "I only knew legends, stories, and rumors revolving around the tattoo. I worry that it's just a coincidence that these pillagers wear it."

Dream frowned as well, feeling frustration surge forward so deep that it almost made his eyes burn. George noticed Dream's fists shaking and frowned worriedly. It was quiet for a moment, all three males wallowing in their emotions. Techno studied them, feeling momentarily bad, before his eyes lit up at a thought, "Have you gentlemen ever heard of eyes of ender and the ender portal?"

"It's a part of the legend you were talking about," Bad answered him, nodding with a troubled expression, "Most people have heard of it but no one's ever *seen* an end portal. At least, no one's made it back alive to talk about it."

"True, no one knows if an end portal is real," George nodded, sighing afterwards, "Supposedly the end portal takes you to the End but you need 12 eyes of ender to activate it, which are near impossible to get."

"Right...but I just had a thought," Techno smirked as they all looked at him with an eyebrow raised, "There's supposedly a group trapped in the nether...if that rumor *is* true then what if that group are the pillagers you are looking for?"

"What do you mean?" Dream asked, obviously confused, "If they were trapped in the nether then how are they kidnapping people in the overworld?"

"After Bad's village was attacked no survivors have come forward looking for them. You two are the only ones I know of. It's possible they went to the nether sometime after attacking Bad's village," Techno explained thoughtfully, "Or it's possible that they are a larger group than we know and part of their group is in the nether."

"Why would they be in the nether though?" Bad questioned, raising a brow.

"If they are indeed worshippers of the Ender Dragon and want it released in the overworld then they need ender pearls and blaze powder," Techno explained further as his eyes lit up, "There is a place in the nether that's been reportedly called the Warped Forest which, rumor has it, the Endermen love to roam."

"Really?" George blinked, his eyes widening, "So you think that the group in the nether are trying to get ender pearls and blaze powder to make eyes of ender for the supposed end portal? I haven't heard of people successfully pulling that off. The nether is a hard place to survive in and if you lose your portal for any reason you're as good as *gone*."

"True," Dream agreed, his eyes narrowed in thought, "Techno's on to something here I think."

"I believe if you want to find out more from here then you should travel to the nether and see if there are people trapped there as rumors say," Techno said as he placed his hands on his hips, "At this point it is your *best* lead. If I happen to hear anything about those pillagers from my own investigation then I can send a note to you."

"You'd do that?!" Bad beamed and Techno actually chuckled, nodding his head.

"Going to the nether won't be easy," Dream trailed off, tensing as he glanced at George. George looked worried.

"It's easier when you are prepared," Techno smirked, "Take plenty of food and I suggest you each get a suit of iron armor at least. Bring gold with you too because there are mobs there that like that I believe. I have not been to the nether myself so I do not know for sure."

"I know some things about the nether from my books!" Bad grinned cheerfully as he patted his pack behind him, "It's worth checking out! What do you guys think?"

"If it'll lead us to finding out more about those pillagers then I'm going," Dream nodded as he grinned back at Bad, "We can take our time preparing for the trip."

They both looked at George and he was frowning, still worried, "I don't know...I'm not experienced enough for the nether..."

"Don't worry. I'll teach you a bunch of things," Dream smirked, purposefully sounding flirty. George's eyes widened as he looked at Dream before he rolled his eyes.

"You're so *weird*," George muttered before sighing, "If we prepare enough then we might actually be okay. This group could be the pillagers you're looking for and if not...then at least we could help them. They might know something from having been in the nether."

"Yeah!" Bad cheered as he turned to Techno, "Seriously, thank you Techno!"

Techno smiled at Bad, "I am sorry I could not help more. However, if there comes a time that you need a place to go, my city is open to you three. I will mark it on the map for you."

"Thanks!" Bad and George beamed simultaneously as Bad handed over Dream's map to Techno while Dream rose an eyebrow incuriously.

"You barely know us...why would you give us that information? Aren't you, like, the *ruler*?"

"Yes, I was made the leader," Techno laughed as he crossed gazes with Dream. He smirked, "I am an *excellent* judge of character. If I were not sure of you three then I would not have helped you. I am sure you know what I mean Dream."

Dream blinked, thrown off guard. George snickered at Dream as he playfully pushed his arm against his. Dream rolled his eyes but playfully pushed back. Bad looked over the map after Techno handed it back to him, "Thanks again Technoblade!"

"No problem Badboyhalo," Techno teased, still somehow monotone. His expression turned serious, "I must be getting back. I have people to look after...if I leave them alone too long there will be chaos upon my return. Especially from those kids..."

"Bye Techno!" Bad waved as George and Dream chuckled to themselves at the way Techno talked. Techno dipped his head at them politely before walking off into the shadows of the trees.

They watched him leave in silence. Dream turned to George and Bad, taking a deep breath, "I have a feeling we're gonna find something big in the nether..."

"I do too," Bad smiled, looking determined, "It won't be easy but I just feel like this is important!"

"We need to find a cave soon to get iron," George mused as his brown eyes glazed over in thought, "Techno's right about us needing iron armor. He also mentioned gold..."

"We'll look for a cave," Dream nodded, glancing at George, "It might take us awhile to get everything we need to be prepared. In the meantime, I can spar with you to teach you some things about sword fighting."

George looked at Dream, smiling slightly, "Sounds good."

"By the way," Bad cleared his throat and they both looked over to see he was leaning against the boulder, a thick black book in his hand, "We're going to need things for the nether portal *itself*...one of which is obsidian. That'll be the hardest thing to get."

"Right..." Dream frowned and George scowled, "We'll need to make a diamond pickaxe, that'll mine the obsidian easier without ruining it. I already have flint and steel...according to the stories don't you need that to light the portal to the nether?"

"Yup," Bad grinned as he closed his book and stuffed it in his bag before throwing the bag back over his shoulder, "For now let's look for a good place to camp. We can go hunting and stock up on food then start fresh tomorrow!"

"Great," Dream smirked, feeling a rush of adrenaline and confidence. They had a lead, possibly a very *good* one, and he just had a feeling he was getting close to finding his friend.

"We have a lot to do," George laughed softly as he looked at the other two, "Let's get started!"

Chapter 5

Several days passed into a week and it was almost like a blur to George. For the most part, days used to feel so dreadfully *long* to him; ever since meeting Dream, however, it seemed like the days passed faster than he ever recalled. Perhaps this was a good thing. Dream, George, and Bad kept themselves busy preparing for their trip into the nether. Most of the days were spent collecting supplies around them.

George managed to shear wool from whatever sheep they managed to find as they traveled. He was ever grateful that Bad packed useful tools like shears, things that Dream had yet to collect or had worn out over his years of traveling. Bad was incredibly impressed with George being able to spin wool into bandages and that he knew how to make hardened string out of spiderwebs.

As they spent the days traveling and searching for necessary supplies, they never once came across a deep cave. They only found small openings with some coal for torches, but no iron and they didn't want to risk their only pickaxes to mine down to look for more. It was disappointing but they had their hands full with getting other supplies that they figured they'd come across a good cave eventually as they traveled.

When they weren't hunting for food to stock up on or supplies to pack away, Dream was was teaching George how to fight. They sparred for what felt like hours every afternoon and George was pleased that he wasn't as bad as he thought he was at first, no matter that Dream did everything effortlessly. That didn't count. George knew better by now than to compare his skills to *Dream's*.

George grew more nervous the more days passed by. Truthfully, he was still frightened by the idea of going into the nether. The nether wasn't a place most people went to willingly because people died all the time there. It was that fact that made him so nervous. He didn't know what he'd do if he lost his new friends and he realized one night as he tried to sleep that Dream and Bad were now all he had.

Unlike them, *he* didn't have friends who remembered him and might be waiting for rescue. He didn't even have a home anymore. Dream and Bad were all he had left and if they died in the nether...but when George remembered how excited they both were at getting closer to saving their loved ones, he didn't have it in his heart to tell them his anxieties.

The only thing George could do was try to improve his skills so he could protect his friends.

"Your stances are getting better, I'll give you that," Dream teased as he shuffled away from George, swinging his iron sword around in his hand lazily. George rolled his eyes at Dream, "You're almost good enough to disarm me too, but not quite."

"Maybe you're not a good teacher then," George taunted, smirking and Dream huffed, "You've only been teaching me defensive stuff anyway."

"Well you *do* need to learn how to block and parry," Dream grinned, "You've learned that pretty quickly I'd say."

George blinked, flushing a bit at the unexpected praise, "Thanks..."

"Let's go again. This time I'll walk you through how to disarm your opponent and then we can try to spar again," Dream ordered, still grinning. George nodded seriously as they stepped closer to

each other, each getting in stances.

True to his word, Dream gave him advice as they slowly worked through the motions of how to disarm someone. It amazed George just how good Dream was at this. The advice he gave him was easy to understand and he explained things so thoroughly, like how to move every part of his body as George moved to disarm him. Once he'd done it successfully, or at least up to Dream's standards, they leaned back and George was smiling brightly.

"Okay, now let's try that in actual spar again. No slow stuff," Dream said and then he smirked, "Maybe you'll *actually* disarm me this time."

George's eyebrow twitched in annoyance and he frowned at how overly confident Dream was being. Oh how he'd love to take him down a peg! George shifted into a stance and Dream, still smirking, shifted into a stance as well. Dream moved towards him first, catching him off guard. He still managed to bring his sword up to block Dream's. He could feel Dream pressing forward, trying to use his strength to begin disarming him.

Managing to side-step and catch Dream off guard, George ducked from a swing of Dream's sword and they almost began a repetitive dance of trying to disarm each other. It seemed like they were both holding their own for several long minutes. George was already panting with exertion from trying to keep Dream from disarming him and Dream wasn't even breaking out into a sweat. This annoyed him.

Suddenly struck with an idea, a stupid *stupid* idea, George smiled to himself and as his sword once again blocked Dream's sword, he pressed as close as he could, watching confusion briefly flash through Dream's eyes. And then as they both struggled, George moved his face close to Dream's, making the taller male's expression change to one of shock and Dream leaned away spluttering, his eyes wide.

George used that slight distraction to his advantage and pushed back hard with his sword. Dream stumbled slightly and George spun in a circle before kicking Dream straight in the chest. Dream fell to his bottom in the grass, his sword almost flying out his hand. George immediately hovered the tip of his sword in front of Dream, who looked shell-shocked.

"I did it!" George breathed, his eyes widening as he realized his plan worked.

"What was *that*?!" Dream near-yelled, the look of shock still on his face, "Why'd you...you got-"

George immediately started laughing and beamed, "Isn't that something you said when you first started teaching me? Expect the unexpected?"

"Yeah but you..." Dream muttered, cutting himself off. George rose an eyebrow. Dream almost seemed flustered. Dream *never* got flustered. It was gone before George could really study his expression behind the mask. Dream gave a tiny grin, "It almost seemed like you wanted to *kiss* me, Georgie."

George blushed but he scoffed all the same, "As if...you're just a sore loser."

"You only won the spar because you played a dirty trick," Dream snickered and playfully fluttered his long eyelashes at George, "Aren't you gonna offer to help me up?"

"You're so stupid," George laughed softly, his chest feeling light in amusement as he offered Dream his hand. He helped Dream up and noticed how Dream's hand tightened in his own for a second before they both let go.

"You look exhausted," Dream commented after a moment, he sounded amused. George huffed, adjusting his blue hoodie.

"Kind of. Not everyone is a born warrior like you," He replied and Dream rose an eyebrow at him. It wasn't that he sounded bitter, but it was obvious there was something behind George's tone. George flicked his eyes away from Dream's.

He felt a hand in his own again and his eyes widened slightly, his heart immediately skipping a beat as Dream said softly, "You *are* learning really quickly George. You'll be giving me a real run for my money soon. I wouldn't lie to you about that."

George realized Dream was trying to comfort him. A small but warm smile blossomed on his face as he faced Dream. Dream was smiling back at him sincerely, "Thanks Dream..."

"You're welcome," Dream beamed, his smile widening. George suddenly wished he could see Dream's whole face and not just his smile. It was hard enough seeing his eyes sometimes. George resisted the odd urge to squint and study Dream, "I have an idea!"

"What's that?" George asked, tilting his head curiously. A look passed through Dream's eyes then but that was replaced by a smirk and excitement. George felt a pang in his chest. He's become accustomed to the fact that *that* look meant Dream was up to no good.

"Let's take a break from the sparring," Dream began as his expression lit up even more, "I should teach you some things about evading pursuers and tracking."

George blinked, thrown off guard by that, "And how will you do that?"

Dream's smirk widened and suddenly George wished he never asked. Dream leaned closer to George and that's when George still realized they were holding hands. What the hell?! "You learn by doing right? Well you start running and I'll hunt you, that'll be your evading lesson. Try not to get caught by me."

"*What?*" George gulped, a full body shiver suddenly racked his body as he took a step back, trying to tug his hand out of Dream's.

Dream laughed, his eyes twinkling with amusement, "I'll give you a three minute head start and then I'll start hunting you. You have to try to evade me, okay?"

George desperately tried to calm his frantically beating heart, "I've never...how will I learn anything while *running* from you?"

"If you're observant you'll learn some things," Dream teased, "And afterwards I'll advise you about things you might not have noticed."

"I think you're just wanting to play," George pouted, feeling annoyed. Dream wheezed lightly.

"That too," He grinned, showing teeth and George felt another shiver go through him. Dream suddenly let go of his hand and pointed to the woods on their left, "Your three minute head start begins *now*."

Realizing how serious Dream was, George immediately started running and sheathed his sword for the time being. He could feel Dream's eyes on him for awhile until he disappeared into the trees. George was already breathing fast, panicking. He didn't know the first *thing* about evading pursuers. He'd never had to do that before! How was he supposed to hide and evade *Dream*?!

He knew enough to know that his footsteps and breathing could give him away to Dream if he wasn't careful, but how does one avoid stepping on sticks and leaves without breaking their damn ankles? George frowned heavily, studying the area as he ran. Could he get away with hiding in the trees? The trees would also let him see the area around him better.

George rushed toward the closest tree, one that had many branches, and began climbing. His heart was pounding in his chest. It'd already felt like three minutes had passed. Surely Dream was chasing him by now. He hurriedly climbed up the tree as high as he could go. He could see the fields he and Dream were sparring in and, sure enough, Dream wasn't there anymore. George's breath hitched and he burrowed closer to the leaves of the tree, trying to keep himself hidden.

It was almost deathly silent for a minute and George kept feeling a pang of hurt in his chest. He realized then he was unconsciously holding his breath. He tried to slow down his breathing so he wasn't making much noise. Then he heard a snap. His eyes went wide as he glanced around. A few yards away, Dream was squatting down, studying the ground intently. George almost slapped his hands over his mouth to prevent the gasp in the back of his throat.

Dream stood slowly and looked around, smirking, "Oh George~!"

George felt an odd thrill wash over him and bit his tongue to keep his mouth shut. He pressed his hands closer over his mouth and nose, trying to stay as silent as possible. Dream was still studying his surroundings but never lost his smirk, "You did good hiding footprints and I can tell you kept trying not to step on any sticks or leaves. That's smart."

He felt himself turn warm in the face a little at the praise and kept his eyes trained on Dream, praying that Dream didn't look too hard in any of the trees and spot him. Dream kept scanning the ground, "However, I don't see anymore disturbed dirt from this point. So you climbed a tree, huh?"

George felt his heart stop. Dream could tell he didn't keep running just by looking into the dirt? How did he know that for *sure*? Dream began scanning the trees and George's mind started racing. Does he climb down enough, jump down, and make a run for it? Does he stay hidden within the leaves and hope Dream doesn't spot him?

He was so lost in his thoughts that he didn't notice Dream scanning up the trees. George felt himself panic. He should have protested this little lesson of Dream's more. Dream's eyes were glazed over in thought as he kept looking, "Where are you George? I know you're here somewhere~! You should have kept running away instead of hiding in a tree."

George frowned, irritation flaring in his chest. Dream *knew* that George wasn't experienced with this kind of thing! His irritation immediately vanished when Dream's eyes were scanning the tree he was in. Then George outright panicked when Dream's eyes roamed over the leaves and then latched onto his. Dream smirked, "There you are Georgie!"

Gasping, George began curling himself and climbing down the tree a little just as Dream rushed forward, laughing as he began climbing up. George just needed to get close enough so he could jump down safely and run off. His heart was hammering in his chest and he climbed down. He gasped when he saw how fast Dream was climbing, "Are you meeting me halfway or what? You're giving up George?"

"Not on your life," George scoffed, stunning Dream momentarily. George took advantage of that and jumped, mentally preparing himself for the sting in his ankles. He gasped when he landed on the ground and felt pain flare from his ankles up into his knees. He half-fell to the ground but immediately scrambled up, running off as he heard Dream land on the ground as well.

"Come on, George~!" Dream laughed out and George couldn't help but panic as he heard Dream running after him. He could hear the crunching on the ground and it sounded pretty close behind him. George pushed himself to go faster.

"Leave me *alone* Dream!" George gasped and Dream's laughing turned into wheezing, almost making George grin despite himself. If he didn't feel like his chest was on fire, George *might* have enjoyed this chase more, "This isn't even a lesson!"

"It is in a way," Dream teased and George desperately wanted to look over his shoulder because it sounded like Dream was literally right behind him. George felt like he couldn't run any faster than he was, "Just let me catch you, George."

"No!" George yelled, pursing his lips. Dream laughed again and, out of the corner of his eye, George saw some berry bushes. That gave George an idea. He grinned and ran in a way that hopefully hid the bush from Dream's view. When George was close enough he paused for the briefest second, knowing Dream was probably close behind him, and then jumped.

He immediately took off running again, trying to control his ragged breathing when he heard Dream curse and it sounded like he stumbled, "What the hell George?"

George threw back his head and laughed because he couldn't help it. He wasn't *exactly* sure that Dream would run into the berry bush but apparently his idea worked. He knew how prickly those berry bushes were and he felt hysterical at the mental image of Dream running straight into one.

He didn't realize that he had slowed down until he felt a hard body barrel into him. The unexpected force of it sent him rolling down a small little hill. George realized he was still laughing and there was a weird wheezing that he realized was Dream laughing as well. Once they stopped rolling, George gasped when he fell onto something warm.

All laughter died down and George opened his eyes to see he'd landed half on top of Dream. His head and upper body was sprawled on Dream's chest. One of George's legs were tangled with Dreams. George's eyes widened as he pushed himself up on his hands, glancing down at Dream. The taller male stopped laughing around the same time George had and was staring at George with wide eyes before he grinned, "Well this is a nice position, isn't it?"

George blushed deep red and smacked Dream across the chest, sitting up so he wasn't laying on Dream, "You're so dumb!"

"Yet you love me," Dream chuckled as he also sat up. George felt his heart jump harshly in his chest.

"Whatever you say *Dream*," George rolled his eyes, trying to ignore his beating heart and how red he was. He felt like he might pass out and he didn't even know completely why.

"You're so predictable sometimes, George," Dream said as he smirked, "I knew you'd probably go for the trees."

George felt annoyance and embarrassment creep up, "Then why even suggest this little game of yours?"

"Well I wanted to have fun~!" Dream joked, chuckling once before his face mellowed out, "But I really do want to teach you about evading pursuers and stuff....just in case."

George's annoyed expression fell away in the face of Dream's seriousness, "I did learn a couple things..."

"I'll teach you more about how I tracked you down," Dream grinned as his eyes lit up, "Let's take a break though."

"*Thank* you," George groaned dramatically, lying back in the grass and leaves while closing his eyes, "I feel like I'm dying right now and you look like you barely broke a sweat!"

"I'm used to this, remember?" Dream replied, something odd in his tone. It almost sounded like sarcasm but George realized it was slight bitterness...like he wasn't proud that he was experienced. George felt a bit of coldness wash over him when he remembered this wasn't exactly the life Dream has *chosen*.

"Sorry," George apologized quietly, opening his eyes. He squinted at the light from the sun and focused on the trees instead. Dream stayed silent for a second and George heard rustling. He cut his eyes away from the tree to look to his right. Dream slowly laid down next to him, but with the mask on and his position, George couldn't see his expression, only his lips.

"It's okay," Dream murmured finally, staring at the sky. George wished he could see Dream's full expression but looked away from his mask to look back up at the swaying trees.

The two stayed quiet for several long moments. George wondered if Bad was getting worried about them yet. He knew where they were though and what they were doing. They always sparred at this time and usually Bad was off getting food or wood while they were gone. Bad was probably fine.

"Hey George...?" Dream questioned, his voice trailing off. His tone was soft enough that he didn't really startle George out of his thoughts. George turned his head to look at the side of Dream's mask.

"Yeah Dream?"

"Why didn't you leave your village?" Dream asked quietly and George froze, "Before me, I mean...why did you stay there with those people? I know that was random but sometimes it bothers me..."

"I..." George swallowed and then cleared his throat. Dream turned his head and George momentarily paused when Dream's golden-like eyes latched onto his dark brown ones, "The world is pretty dangerous and I...didn't think I could do it alone. I didn't think *anyone* could...until you."

"What do you mean 'me'?" Dream parroted, clearing confused.

"Other than that injury when we met, you seemed just fine on your own. You survived all those years," George whispered, looking away for a minute.

"I wouldn't call that fine," Dream muttered and George felt a pang in his chest. Did he offend Dream? "I don't think I really came out of that fine..."

"What do you mean?" George questioned, confusion and empathy coloring his tone. Dream shuffled and cleared his throat. George realized that Dream felt awkward. He'd never seen Dream awkward before.

"For years I never spoke more than a couple of sentences to a person," Dream explained hesitantly, his eyes meeting George's again, "Not being around people for years, being alone like that, it does things to people."

"I guess it would," George frowned, his eyes scanning Dream, "But you seem fine to me. And

you're not alone anymore."

He reached out and grabbed Dream's hand without thinking. George didn't like when people touched him and quite frankly it might be because no one ever touched him or hugged him. Not since his parents. No one showed him affection with words or physically after his parents. No one except Dream. Maybe that was why it didn't really bother George when Dream did things like hugging him or touching his hand or his arm.

Dream's eyes went a little wide before he smiled, curling his fingers around George's, "Thank you George. You're so sweet."

George blushed a little and rolled his eyes, "I-I'm not sweet...you just haven't met many decent people."

"I'll say!" Dream laughed, almost wheezing. George grinned at the familiar wheeze and laughed a little. After he calmed down a bit, Dream glanced over at George again, "What kind of things do you like to do George...?"

"What's with you and all these random questions?" George teased and Dream snickered, "Well, I generally just like to make things...like crafting in general."

"You're really good at it," Dream nodded, grinning. George flushed but smiled, feeling pleased, "Is there anything else you like doing?"

George hummed and stared at the swaying trees again in thought, "I like climbing..."

"Not surprising," Dream teased and George giggled, unable to help himself.

"I also like swimming," George grinned as he looked back at Dream, "I'm also finding out that I like archery. I'm pretty good with a bow...but I still want to get better with a sword."

Dream nodded, smiling softly, "You can work on both. I've noticed you have really good aim with a bow but you can get better at sword for self defense!"

"Yeah," George laughed, feeling oddly proud that he managed to impress Dream with his bow skills. He only recently started using a bow when he, Dream, and Bad go hunting for food. He peeked at Dream again, "What about you?"

"Huh?" Dream looked over at him like he was caught off guard.

"What things do *you* like to do?" George asked with a smile. Dream blinked at him before smiling.

"Oh. Well I like swordsmanship...its weird but I like fighting with axes too," Dream smirked and George chuckled, somehow that suited him, "I also like parkouring."

"Parkouring?" George rose an eyebrow, caught off guard.

"Yeah, you know what that is right?" Dream asked hesitantly, like he might offend George.

"Of course I know what parkouring is," George laughed before shaking his head, "Or I've heard of it I should say. I haven't seen anyone actually parkour before."

"I'm really good at it," Dream boasted as his eyes lit up. George blinked at him in surprise, "Back at my home village, we used to have this little parkour thing set up and the teens and kids would all play on it, competing with each other. I always won and Sappnap would come pretty close too!"

George felt warmth in his chest and he fondly smiled as he watched Dream talk about the good memories of his village. Eventually though Dream trailed off and his smile died. George squeezed his hand, hoping to comfort him. Dream looked at George's face quietly for a second.

"You know George you...." Dream trailed off like he was uncertain and George rose an eyebrow when he smiled after a second like he'd made a decision, "I never thought I'd feel close to someone like this after my family...after Sapnap..."

George felt his heart leap in his throat and a funny feeling in his stomach. Suddenly he was hyper aware of how close they were and it felt like his hand in Dream's was hot and almost going to get sweaty. He resisted the urge to pull away when Dream continued, "I care about you just like I cared about my family and just like I care about Sapnap...and Bad too. I love you."

George's mouth parted and he felt his heart thudding in his chest. Dream cared about him like he was his family? He felt his heart melt and his eyes burn. No one has ever cared about him like that. Is this what it meant to have a friend? Its been years since anyone told him they loved him. George attempted to speak around the thick emotions in his throat, "T-Thanks Dream..."

"You okay?" Dream asked, sounding a bit concerned. He squeezed George's hand, "Did I make you uncomfortable?"

"No," George shook his head, "I've just never had someone say stuff like that to me or care about me...it just made me happy."

"Aww, George," Dream grinned, relieved that George wasn't upset.

"How are you so *blunt* with your feelings like that? Don't you get embarrassed?" George complained and Dream wheezed, laughing loudly. George allowed a small smile to stretch across his face, "I'm glad we're friends..."

Dream paused then and George wondered if that was weird to say. Something flashed across Dream's gaze before Dream smiled, "Me too..."

Both Dream and George stiffened when they heard a noise in the distance. They immediately separated their hands and stood. Then the noise drew close enough for them to make out. It was Bad calling for them, "Dream? George?"

"Bad!" George cupped his hands around his mouth to call for the black-clad male, "We're over here!"

George and Dream walked towards Bad's voice and eventually met up with the other halfway in the woods. Bad looked immensely relieved once he caught sight of them. Then he frowned, "Where were you two muffins? You've been gone longer than you usually are and when I came to the field you weren't there!"

"Sorry," Dream grinned brightly, "I was teaching him something new and we lost track of time."

Bad rose an eyebrow and studied the two before he sighed, "Well let's get back. It'll be dark in a couple of hours and we need to start building a fire to cook."

"Yes sir," George teased and both he and Dream laughed when Bad shot him a look. All three immediately turned to head back to their little camp.

That night after they'd eaten some strips of cooked beef, Bad discussed some ideas with them. It'd

been a week since they'd met up with Techno and decided to take a trip into the nether yet they haven't found a single cave deep enough to provide iron let alone diamonds. Bad convinced them that their best bet was to go up higher into the mountains to look for deep caves.

Dream agreed with Bad and George did too, but it was going to get pretty cold if they decided to go up a mountain. When he voiced that, however, they didn't seem worried about the cold. Dream even jokingly said that if George got too cold then they could just cuddle. All jokes aside, George eventually agreed that their best bet was to travel to a mountain. And that's what they decided to do when the sun rose again.

For now it was George's turn to keep watch half the night before he was due to wake up Bad for the last half of the night. However, Dream was awake with him instead of sleeping like Bad which was kind of annoying considering Dream kept watch *a lot* due to Dream's own insistence, so it was annoying that he wasn't sleeping when he *could*.

George flicked his brown eyes to study Dream where he sat against the log of a tree, helping George make arrows with feathers they'd been collecting over the past few days. They weren't going to be the best arrows since they didn't have iron for the arrowhead but it was better than not having any arrows at all.

"Tell me again why you *aren't* sleeping?" George sighed, pausing in his own movements. Dream grinned and looked up at him.

"Aww, don't hurt my feelings Georgie. Don't you want to spend time with me?" Dream joked and George narrowed his eyes at him.

"Seriously Dream...you're always trying to keep watch and you don't get as much sleep as the rest of us," George complained and Dream went silent, his smile falling, "Why don't you just go to sleep? Do you think I can't handle watching out for you two, is that it?"

"No!" Dream shouted, his eyes widening and his head whipping around to face George. George flinched at the loudness and suddenness of Dream's shout, "I don't think that about you George!"

"Then what is it? Why won't you sleep?" George questioned quietly, allowing worry to show on his face. Dream's mouth twisted.

"I just couldn't fall asleep that's all..." Dream trailed off. Dream's golden-yellow eyes stared at the stick and knife in his hand, "It's nothing George...I'll try again in another hour I promise."

George scowled but didn't want to push Dream to talk if he didn't want to, "Okay, I'll hold you to that."

Dream still looked tense and George momentarily felt guilty for that so George smiled and decided to change the subject as he went back to chipping away at his own stick with his own knife, "Hey Dream...are your eyes green?"

"Huh?" Dream blurted, looking over at him in confusion. George giggled, "Oh...right. Yeah they are. They're almost like a darkish-green I think. I've always had green eyes."

"Darkish green huh?" George parroted, studying Dream from where he sat close to their fire. He couldn't see Dream's eyes well from the distance. Dream smiled.

"What color do you see them as? I didn't even realize until now that you wouldn't see green," Dream laughed slightly and George grinned.

"To me they're a golden color, almost like a golden brown and sometimes they look dark yellowish. So I knew it must be some shade of green," George shrugged and Dream snickered.

"That actually sounds pretty cool," Dream said and George smiled, "I wish I could see what you see."

George's eyes widened as he flicked his eyes to Dream again. Dream wasn't looking at him though, but at what he was doing. George huffed, smiling, "Then you wouldn't see your favorite color."

"Trueeee," Dream drawled, laughing once more but then he paused and looked over at George, "Wait...how do you know my favorite color was green? I never told you that."

"I just assumed based on what you always wear. Unless it's *actually* yellow and you like yellow?" George teased and Dream rolled his eyes.

"Okay wise guy. So you're more observant than I thought," Dream huffed and George laughed, covering his mouth. Dream's mouth quirked into a smile.

There was the briefest rustle in the distance. Dream and George froze, both their heads whirling around to look at their surroundings. Their small camp was lit up with torches, enough to see a small perimeter around their camp so that anyone keeping watch could see a mob coming and have time to alert the others while taking action.

They didn't see anything but George felt his shoulders tense. Was it just the wind rustling leaves? As if answering his thoughts, there were more rustling and he jolted when Dream stood abruptly. A second after that, they heard the telltale signs of groaning. George stood up quickly as well, adrenaline pumping through his veins as he reached for his sword. Dream already had his out.

"Bad!" George whispered loudly, nudging Bad's sleeping form with his foot. Bad was sleeping on the other side of the campfire George has been sitting close to. He nudged harder and Bad groaned.

"What...what is it?" Bad grumbled as he rubbed one eye with a palm. George opened his mouth to answer, but multiple groans answered instead. Dream cursed under his breath while Bad's eyes widened and he struggled to stand quickly, immediately awake. Fear pumped in George's veins as he realized it was more than *one* zombie coming.

"We really need to add shields to our list of supplies," Dream hissed under his breath, almost like he were actually talking to himself. George's eyes widened.

"That's a good idea," George muttered as his hand curled around his iron sword. Bad was loading his crossbow when the first two zombies showed themselves, thankfully in the direction they were facing.

Dream was rushing forward before George had time to blink, but he quickly joined Dream's side. Both of them kept the zombies out of biting range using their swords and George tried not to get distracted when Dream side-stepped, letting the zombie he was facing stumble before swung around and decapitated it with one single swing.

George scowled as he dodged getting grabbed by the zombie he was facing. He pushed the zombie back with his sword before kicking one of its legs with his foot. When it was off balance he thrust his sword forward, impaling it. George felt bile rise up his throat at the yellowish brown substance that started leaking from it. He pulled his sword out and swung it again, cutting into its neck. It wasn't enough to decapitate it like Dream had done but it did kill it.

He glanced over to see Dream was engaged with another zombie and he briefly flicked his eyes to

Bad, startled to see him using one of his arrows to stab a zombie in the eye. There was another sneaking up on him, "Bad, look out!"

Bad whipped around immediately at George's shout and kicked the other zombie away from him before it could grab him. He surprised George by grabbing a dagger from somewhere in his black jacket and throwing it in the zombie's face. George shivered. Sometimes even *Bad* seemed dangerous.

"I think that's the last of 'em," Dream spoke up and they both looked over to see Dream standing over the body of the other zombie he'd been fighting. George quickly looked away when he noticed guts coming out of that body. George distracted himself by leaning down and trying to clean his sword with the grass. It wasn't as easy to do as he thought.

"Are you guys okay?" Bad asked and George could feel Bad checking him over. He rolled his eyes affectionately.

"Yeah we're fine," Dream laughed and George heard him walk over towards Bad, "Are you good?"

"Yup!" Bad answered cheerfully. George huffed in irritation when he almost got zombie blood on his hands. He was so wrapped up in trying to clean his sword that he almost jumped two feet in air when Dream shouted.

"*BAD!*"

George whirled around in time to see Dream throwing himself at Bad and an arrow whiz past them, cutting Dream along his cheek instead of hitting Bad in the head like it would have. George's eyes widened as panic clogged his throat when Dream stumbled from surprise. Bad steadied him looking ready to fall in the ground with panic of his own.

George whipped his head to where the arrow came from and before he realized it, he was running towards that direction. Coming into view from the trees, George saw a familiar flash of white and acted without thinking. He grabbed his sword with both hands as he ran up, jumped, and swung his iron sword in a large arc. He apparently used more strength than he thought because the skeleton's skull was whacked clean off its body and went flying, hitting a tree behind it and rolling to a stop on the ground a good ways away.

He was panting and his eyes were still wide as he turned to meet Dream's and Bad's shocked gazes. George could hardly believe that just happened. His head was spinning. Dream's expression turned to awe, "George! That was *amazing!* You were *so* fast!"

"I d...don't even know what happened," George breathed, startled when Bad walked around Dream with a beam on his face.

"See I *told* you that you had good reaction timing!" Bad teased as his eyes lit up, "You did so good, George!"

George felt himself blush but that disappeared completely when he looked back at Dream and saw the thin blood trail going from his cheek to his neck, "Dream!"

Dream startled, eyes widening, "W-What?!"

Bad seemed to remember that Dream got hurt too and he whirled around to look at Dream's cut, "You muffin! Sit down!"

It was sort of amusing watching Bad basically wrestle Dream into sitting next to the campfire as

Dream protested. George rushed towards them and grabbed his pack, shuffling to get to his wool bandages as Bad leaned back and looked around, "George, you're better at fixing injuries than me. I'll leave Dream to you."

"You're both dramatic," Dream groaned, rolling his eyes, "It's just a small cut. You're lucky it wasn't your head, Bad."

Bad's face softened, "I know. Thank you for saving me, Dream. You're such a good little muffin."

Dream snorted in amusement but actually looked a tad embarrassed, much to George's surprise and amusement. He squatted down close to Dream's right side and leaned in to examine Dream's cheek. The cut wasn't deep enough to need stitches and immediate relief flood through George's body.

George didn't even realize he was beaming until Dream gave a tiny laugh and asked, "What?"

"Huh?" George said, meeting Dream's gaze. He realized how close they were and tried not to blush, "Uh, nothing...looks like you don't need stitches."

"Told you you were being dramatic," Dream smirked and George ignored him as he began to carefully wipe up the blood on Dream's skin to clean the wound. He realized his fingers were shaking but he couldn't make them stop. He just hoped Dream didn't notice.

He wiped up the blood and used some more water on wool to clean the cut itself. He got a clean piece of wool cloth and began to tape it to cover Dream's cut when Dream spoke up again, almost hesitantly, "George...?"

"What?" George asked quietly, as he smoothed the bandage, trying to make sure it was covering the cut well.

"Are you okay? You're shaking..."

Dream sounded worried. George leaned back, avoiding Dream's eyes as he looked around, spotting Bad walking around their torches, scowling into the woods as he continued to make sure no more mobs were coming. He turned back to face Dream, "Yeah, I'm okay...its just...I dunno..."

"Just what...?" Dream questioned, tilting his head with interest as he scooted closer to George, who gulped.

"It's just...when I heard you shout and saw that arrow whiz past you...." George paused, biting his lip, "I kept thinking what would have happened if you didn't dodge in time."

Dream went silent. Then after a long moment he scooted even closer to George so that their arms were touching. George felt strangely comforted, "Sorry George..."

"You're so reckless you know?" George glared at him and Dream's eyes widened behind his mask, "I get that you were protecting Bad but you...you're always doing something dangerous!"

"Not *always*," Dream protested but he was strangely smiling. George rose an eyebrow at him and Dream noticed, "Sorry...I can't help but feel happy."

George looked at him like he grew another head then and Dream laughed loudly, wheezing. This startled poor Bad from across the way and he rose an eyebrow at them, getting closer, "Is Dream loopy from losing too much blood?"

This made Dream wheeze even harder and George felt a hysterical laugh bubble out of him

because Bad somehow sounded *serious* and Dream barely lost blood at *all*. Dream was laughing so hard there were tears in his eyes and he was leaning heavily on George. Bad started chuckling like he couldn't help it, "You two are actually crazy. I don't even know why were laughing!"

"W-We need to stop, we're gonna draw more mobs," George giggled as he covered his mouth. Bad nodded as his chuckles died down and Dream started calming down, gasping. George shook his head at him, "Why in the world did you say you were *happy* when I was scolding you?"

Bad rose an eyebrow and Dream chuckled, still breathing deeply, "B-Because...when I got cut you two look like you were panicking so much and it was really *nothing*, you know? It made me realize how much you guys cared about me."

Bad and George exchanged a look. Then George laughed, "I thought you already knew that, dummy!"

"I did but...." Dream trailed off, a big smile on his face, "But I don't know..."

"Well, on a random note, I don't think there are anymore mobs around. At least for now," Bad sighed as he looked around again. George sobered and nodded seriously, also looking around. They both stared at Dream when he slowly pushed himself up to stand. He began walking to where the skeleton was, "What are you doing, Dream?"

"I want these bones," Dream explained in a simple tone as he bent over and started picking up the skeleton's bones.

"What the hell?" George gasped and Bad glared at him, "Are you a hoarder or something? Why do you want skeleton bones?"

"I'm gonna make something with it," Dream laughed, smirking over at George, "It's a surprise. I'll show you when I make it!"

George rose an eyebrow but decided he was suddenly too exhausted to question Dream. He sighed, packing away the wool he'd brought out for Dream. Bad shrugged and then sighed himself, "I'm too awake to fall asleep now. I'll keep watch so you and Dream should sleep the rest of the night."

"Okay Bad...thanks," George smiled tiredly before looking at Dream when he came back to the fire and started packing away the bones, "You're actually gonna try to sleep, right Dream? You promised..."

Dream looked over at him and smiled, "I will once I pack this away."

True to his word, Dream packed the bones away and grabbed his leather bed roll. To George's surprise, Dream walked over and smoothed his bed roll right next to George as George watched. He decided not to say anything. Truth be told, after seeing Dream almost shot in the face by a skeleton and everything else that happened, he'd probably feel better having Dream sleep close by.

Dream caught his eye as he laid down and grinned. George couldn't help but smile back.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Sorry for taking so long! I was out of town for a week for Thanksgiving and my baby brother's birthday!

Once I got back I had to deal with some internet and personal issues but I should be back to my once a week schedule! ENJOY! Thank you for all the kudos, comments, and bookmarks! :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"This is just plain ridiculous!" Dream complained as he, George, and Bad walked through a bit of light snow.

"At least we got some of coal and iron from that small cave yesterday," George grinned over at Dream, who sighed deeply.

That was true. Two days had passed before the boys were even able to find a decent mountain to travel on. Once they had found one Bad was pretty excited about the possibility of finding a good cave, however, the only cave they found wasn't deep and they'd only found a bit more coal and just a little bit of iron; it wasn't even enough to make any armor with.

It seemed to be taking forever to find a decent cave and Dream was getting a little impatient. He never was one that liked waiting. George was beginning to notice that Dream was getting angsty and was being really good to Dream by trying to be cheerful or distract him from pessimistic thoughts. George really was amazing...

"...and we should find a village soon. Hopefully we can smelt whatever we find there," Bad started saying and Dream blinked, unaware they had continued talking this whole time while he was stuck in thoughts, "What do you think Dream?"

"I agree," Dream sighed lightly this time and looked over at Bad. He was staring at Dream's map, "We've been marking down anything noteworthy but we haven't seen a village since yours, Bad."

"True," Bad frowned thoughtfully as he looked up from the map, "But we'll come across one *eventually*. Finding a decent cave is the problem right now."

Dream's eyes flickered towards George when he noticed George rubbing his arms a little. Dream was extremely used to both the hot and the cold due to traveling outdoors most of his life. Bad seemed to be okay with it too, plus he was dressed in thicker clothes than Dream or George. Even with a hoodie on, however, it seemed that George was struggling a bit with the chill in the air.

"You okay, George?" Dream asked in concern and George looked over at him in surprise.

"Oh...I'm just a little cold," George laughed slightly, crossing his arms, "I didn't think to bring more clothes other than a hoodie."

"It's not too bad since we're not at the top of the mountain," Bad smiled gently, "If you get too cold we can stop and make a fire or I could lend you my black jacket!"

"No, I'm okay Bad," George chuckled, shaking his head, "Let's just focus on finding another cave soon."

Another quiet hour went by as the boys looked around the expanse of the mountain but there were no caves in sight. Dream's eye twitched. He'd never had a problem finding them before, so why did it seem impossible to find good caves now?! Dream groaned, tucking a hand under his mask to rub his face.

He felt a hand on his shoulder and looked down into George's face. George looked slightly amused, "Why don't we take a break? Let's warm up and eat something."

"Yes!" Bad cheered as he dramatically dropped his pack to the ground and rolled his shoulders, "I really needed a break but didn't want to be the one to ask."

"Pfff, why not?" Dream grinned as he and George both let their packs drop to the ground too, "There's nothing wrong with admitting you need a break."

"I know..." Bad trailed off, shrugging, "Dream can you get a fire started? I'll get some of our packaged meat out."

Dream nodded as he knelt down and rummaged in his pack for his flint and steel. George unwound some wood they each had tied to their pack and began helping Dream arrange it in a neat pile so they could start a fire. It didn't need to be big since they weren't actually camping here so they didn't use a lot of their wood.

Soon after the fire began to spread, Bad distributed some cut meat to Dream and George. They each sat around the fire as close as they could and ate their meat in silence. While they did this Dream checked their food supplies. They'd been stocking up on pork and beef whenever they could. They'd eat it before it could go bad but the best resource of their food came from fruit in trees and fish that Dream caught.

"You're checking the bag a lot, is something wrong?" Bad spoke up and Dream's eyes flicked to him.

"Oh...no I was just checking how much food we had," Dream explained slowly and Bad nodded, glancing at the bag before smiling, "We've been rationing pretty well."

"Food doesn't seem to be a problem," George sighed, "If only we were as lucky at finding *caves* as we are with finding food."

"True," Dream laughed, sitting back and shifting to get comfortable. They continued eating and Bad was the first one finished. Dream watched Bad begin to sharpen a large knife he noticed the black-clad male liked to use when he wasn't using his crossbow.

"Hey Bad...can I ask you something?" George inquired suddenly. They both looked over at him in surprise. Dream noticed the glazed look in George's dark brown eyes.

"Sure George," Bad nodded, gently smiling at the smaller male.

"How'd you get so good at fighting? I noticed during that attack two nights ago that you're pretty good," George commented as he cocked his head, staring at Bad thoughtfully.

"Oh," Bad laughed, grinning brightly, "Skeppy and I used to always spar. We'd play around, practicing with weapons. I'm not really good at fighting..."

Both Dream and George looked at him uncertainly. Dream had noticed Bad's skills as well. Bad blinked at their expressions, "What?"

"The way you stabbed that one zombie in the eye with an arrow and then threw your knife in another's face makes me think you are better at fighting than you think," George replied in amusement, a smile breaking out on his face. Dream snickered.

Bad flushed pink, "Well...I'm good with like a bow...sometimes. I'm better at throwing or shooting things than I am with a sword. I'm used to trying to defend myself. Skeppy used to insist on spars because he was afraid of me not being able to protect myself...."

They could immediately tell that Bad was getting lost in his memories, a sad expression forming on his face. Dream frowned, his chest aching as he thought of Sappnap. Before he could get lost in his own memories George spoke up again, "Skeppy sounds like a great person, Bad. You're so lucky to have him."

Bad's eyes widened in surprise at George before he smiled warmly, "Yeah I am...he's great!"

Something odd flashed across Bad's expression as his eyes drifted over Dream and then George. Dream rose an eyebrow at him and opened his mouth to question him, but Bad beat him to it, "Have you two ever been in love?"

Immediately Dream paled and he glanced down, his heart clenching in his chest. Apparently his reaction was super noticeable because when he looked up, George and Bad were watching him with wide eyes. George spoke up hesitantly, "Dream...you okay?"

"Yeah...its just...I *have* been in love before but..." Dream cursed under his breath for stammering. George's mouth parted and Bad's eyes widened a tad further, "But it didn't end well for me..."

"Did they....die during the attack?" Bad swallowed nervously, clenching his hands together. Dream frowned, his shoulders falling.

"No...I was 15 and it was a year before the attack..." Dream explained with a sigh before his chest clenched further. He frowned, "I don't want to talk about it."

"I'm sorry," Bad frowned sadly, glancing at Dream before turned to George. George flinched, his eyes wide, "George...was there ever anyone that showed interest in you?"

Dream felt his heart ache when George's face fell as he stared at the ground distantly, "No. Never. No one was ever interested in me."

"George..." Bad looked extremely concerned, "Were you alone the whole time? No one was ever nice to you? How on earth did you handle that?"

Dream's eyes widened largely. He'd never considered that exactly. George told him that his parents died when he was eight. If no one acted kindly towards him and shunned him...did that mean he grew up alone with no one to speak with? Dream felt himself pale as he remembered what *he* told George.

"For years I never spoke more than a couple of sentences to a person."

"Not being around people for years, being alone like that, it does things to people."

George was just like him...only he'd been alone longer than Dream ever was. Bad was right. How did George stand that?! Dream felt nauseous thinking about it but he whirled his head around when

George spoke up quietly, "I uh...just had to deal with it? I mean, sometimes travelers or wandering traders came by and we'd chat...it wasn't always so bad. I managed."

"How did you learn anything?" Dream asked in slight horror and Bad sent him a look of concern, "You were eight, right? You had no one to teach you a lot of things...did you have to teach yourself?"

Bad looked like he paled and Dream knew that Bad didn't know George had lost his parents at eight but with Dream's question he figured Bad probably understood now what Dream was talking about. George's face flushed with embarrassment and he shifted awkwardly. It sort of made Dream want to hug him.

"Yeah I mostly taught myself what I needed to know. It was....hard sometimes," George explained as he avoided their eyes, "I also learned by spying on the other villagers since they wouldn't talk to me...I'd listen in on them sometimes too. I know that's creepy but-"

"It's actually smart," Dream smiled but it felt weak on his face. His chest burned in anger at how much George had to go through. Dream wasn't sure he could have handled George's situation if it were *him* that went through it, "You're amazing, George!"

George's eyes widened and his face turned red. Dream chuckled, feeling a bit pleased, "I-I'm not! There's....a lot I don't know..."

His face fell when he said that and Dream frowned at the sad expression that was forming on his face. He glanced over at Bad and noted how Bad looked a tad guilty as he looked at George, "W-Why don't we get moving again before we lose too much daylight?"

"Yeah, let's do that," Dream agreed, understanding that Bad was trying to change the subject. Things were awkwardly silent as they put out the fire and shrugged on their packs.

They began walking again and Dream noticed that George was staring at the ground distantly, a frown on his face. Bad kept glancing at George, looking upset and guilty. Dream fought the urge to sigh. He wasn't sure how he could cheer George up. Maybe they shouldn't have brought up the past. Its not like they could change the past after all...

A few hours later it began to rain. It started off lightly and then four minutes later it began to come down in buckets. They managed to ward off most of the rain by ducking under an insanely large spruce tree.

"This sucks!" Bad groaned as he checked to make sure nothing got too wet in his pack. Dream nodded in agreement as he shuffled. His clothes had gotten wet, but not enough to be damp. They really were lucky to be so close to the tree. Dream's eyes roamed over to George, who had the hood of his hoodie over his dark brown hair. He was shivering a bit and was still frowning slightly.

They hadn't exchanged much words since earlier even after the silence had become less awkward. Dream noticed how George would stare at the ground or in front of him distantly, like he was lost in thoughts. Every now and again, Dream would catch George glancing at him. It seemed that George was a bit upset and Dream didn't know what to do.

Dream stared down at George silently contemplating things he could say to get George not to look so sad or distant. George muttered something under his breath and hugged himself. Dream lifted his hands towards him and hesitated for a second before he moved closer to George.

As straight-faced as possible, Dream began rubbing George's arms and George jumped slightly,

looking at him with wide eyes, "Dream?"

"Sorry you're so cold," Dream said softly, studying George's face to see if he was uncomfortable, "Rubbing your arms like this can help generate heat."

George blinked owlishly at him and he blushed slightly, "T-Thanks..."

He shuffled away from Dream though and Dream let his hands drop, biting back a frown. George started rubbing his own arms and didn't look at Dream again. Maybe he was uncomfortable with what Dream did...Dream caught Bad staring at him and cocked his head at him. Bad just smiled and there was something knowing about it that confused him.

"Oh my God..." George gasped suddenly, startling Bad and Dream. He was squinting in the distance behind them, "Is that...guys is that a cave down there?"

"What?!" Dream whirled around and studied where George was looking. It was hard to see with all the rain, "Where at?!"

"Down there, just down that hill and to the right...it's a small opening I think," George explained as he pointed to the right, "Is it just me? It looks like a black opening...maybe it's nothing?"

"No, you might be right," Bad answered brightly as he squinted too, "I think I see what you're talking about!"

Dream looked harder and through the thick rain, he saw something black tucked into the right corner of the hill. It was hard to tell if it were a cave from this distance. Dream looked at the two males, "Let's run for it. I think it could be a cave."

"If it isn't then we'll just have to run for cover again," George hesitated and looked at Bad, "Make sure Dream's map doesn't get wet."

"Yeah," Bad nodded, already shoving things around in his pack. They patiently waited until he was done, "That should do it. Let's go!"

They took off in a run and followed George down. Dream cringed when he felt the heavy rain slowly soaking into his hoodie and pants. Bad almost slipped once running downhill due to mud but George caught him by the arm and led him the rest of the way. To Dream's intense delight, it really *was* a cave with a really small opening. It would be easy to miss if you weren't looking for it.

Dream rushed in after Bad and George and sighed in relief to not feel the rain soaking into his clothes anymore. Even *he* was starting to feel a bit chilly now. Dream glanced around immediately, trying to judge the atmosphere to make sure there were no mobs present. While he did this, Bad immediately set down his pack and went to make a small fire.

"Ugh, my hoodie is soaked!" George complained, sounding a bit lighter than before thank God. Dream smiled and glanced over at the smaller male before his mouth went dry. George pulled his baby blue hoodie over his head and the white t-shirt underneath rode up to show some of his pale waist. Dream quickly looked away, putting hand over his racing heart.

"Leave it close enough to the fire so it can dry quicker," Bad told George as he stripped his black jacket off him, "Dream you should do the same as us. We don't need any of us getting sick."

"Yeah..." Dream agreed and turned so he could strip his own hoodie off himself. He readjusted his mask and squatted down next to the growing fire Bad made. He placed his soaked hoodie next to George's and rubbed his hands together to ward off the chill he felt.

"Good job finding this cave George," Dream spoke up after a few moments of silence passed. George flicked his eyes to him and smiled slightly, nodding.

"After we've warmed up and stuff we can take some torches and see how far this cave goes," Bad said excitedly as he shifted around, "It already seems like it'll go deep."

"At the very least we'll find a little bit more iron," George muttered as he absentmindedly stared at the flames. Dream stared at him, frowning. Dream noticed Bad staring at George as well with an unknown expression on his face. It went silent for several long minutes and it was almost suffocating to Dream.

"George, I'm *sorry!*" Bad blurted suddenly. George jumped and Dream startled, both of them looking at Bad with wide eyes. That literally came out of nowhere. Bad looked awfully upset, "You haven't been yourself since earlier and that's because of me, right? I'm sorry for prying into your past and making you so upset!"

George's mouth parted, his expression falling for a second before he smiled at Bad, "I appreciate that Bad, but it's not your fault. I don't mind sharing things about myself it's just...I felt really embarrassed when you and Dream questioned me."

Dream jolted, feeling a pang in his chest. So it wasn't only Bad's questions but Dream's that had upset him earlier? Dream felt his shoulders slump. Bad looked ready to tear up, "There's nothing to be embarrassed about George. You can't help things that happened just like Dream and I can't. Just tell me whenever you're uncomfortable with my questions, okay?"

"Okay Bad," George huffed out a laugh and Dream noticed that he relaxed slightly, "I'm sorry for making you worry...I'm okay now."

"Really? And you aren't upset with me, right?" Bad questioned frantically and George's expression softened as he nodded seriously. After that Bad relaxed, sighing in relief. George glanced over at Dream then and Dream didn't realize he was staring at George until their eyes met.

"You okay Dream?" He asked hesitantly.

"Yeah," Dream muttered as he looked away, "I just didn't realize I upset you too."

"You *didn't* upset me....I was just kind of embarrassed and ashamed," George sighed, looking off the side, "My life is so different from yours and it made me feel stupid when I realized I don't know about things like you and Bad do. It made me feel like a child."

Dream felt despair and he was reaching out to touch George before he thought about it, "Aww, George. I'm sorry. It's okay...I'm really sorry."

"It's not your fault," George laughed with a little bit of amusement as he faced Dream then. Dream blinked, a little surprised by the reaction, "You guys worry too much. I wasn't upset with *you* guys...just myself, okay? Both of you stop apologizing."

"Okay," Bad giggled, watching them with a different type of amusement.

Dream rolled his eyes and leaned away from George. He felt a ton better knowing George wasn't upset anymore though.

They sat around their small fire for a couple of hours to let their clothes dry some before the fire died out. After throwing their clothes back on and shrugging on their packs, they began to make

themselves torches so they could see in the cave better. Dream was pleasantly surprised to find that the cave did descend a bit and was fairly large.

Since Dream and Bad were the only one with pickaxes, they started mining first. George helped them by carrying items and organizing the coal and iron ores they mined while also helping by holding torches so the two could see better. Eventually they went a bit further down and encountered a couple of zombies but Dream easily killed them before Bad or George could even grab their weapons.

Then after an hour of searching for more iron, George saw Bad was sweating and his legs seemed to almost shake, "Bad you should take a break. I haven't mined yet so I can take your pickaxe and swap with you."

Bad smiled gratefully as he handed the pickaxe over and sat heavily on the stone floor a couple of yards away from them, "Thanks George. Guess I'm not built for this, huh?"

"There's nothing wrong with that," George chuckled as he glanced to where Dream was off with a torch, peering into the darkness, "Yell if you need us we won't go far."

"Okay," Bad nodded, leaning back. George gave him one last look to make sure he was okay before he walked towards Dream. As he neared him, Dream turned his head and smiled at George.

"Is Bad okay?"

"He just needs a few minutes to catch his breath," George grinned and Dream nodded, glancing over at Bad. George felt warm at Dream's barely concealed concern for Bad. He admired how much Dream cared about his friends. There was something about Dream that made you feel cared for, "Find anymore signs of iron?"

"No, just more coal so far," Dream huffed as he gestured to the left. George squinted, bringing his torch out and saw that there was a small vein of coal, "I think we're good on coal. If we get anymore then we won't have room left for anything else."

"True. We managed to get more iron and so far we have enough for at least one set of armor I think," George grumbled as he stared off in thought, "Though I'm no blacksmith..."

"It's enough for one set," Dream laughed, "We just need enough for two more. It's quite a lot of iron ore to be carrying but it'll be worth it once we find a village to smelt it at."

George blinked as a sudden thought came to him. He turned to face Dream, staring at his mask, "Do you know how to make armor?"

"Well, I've made myself armor in the past. I'm no blacksmith and it was hardly great quality..." Dream trailed off and if George didn't know any better he'd think Dream was a little embarrassed, "But yes...I know how to make armor."

"That's so cool," George blurted, turning pink when Dream grinned at him in a pleased way. He hadn't meant to say that out loud exactly but oh well. He turned away quickly, "Let's find some more iron!"

Dream laughed softly, "Let's..."

They walked a little further, unwilling to leave Bad alone too long, and they both sighed when they noticed it went deeper but split into two parts. Dream frowned and looked at George seriously, "Let's get Bad and decide which way we should go."

"What if we get lost though?" George fretted as he stared at the two options, "We're getting deeper in. I don't want to lose our way."

"That's true," Dream said and he tsked. They both turned sharply when they heard a noise but the light they saw made them realize it was just Bad.

Bad came into view a moment later and visibly relaxed when his eyes landed on the two, "There you guys are. It got quiet and I was a little worried..."

He trailed off when he noticed the two paths descending into the cave. Dream looked back and studied each path, "We were gonna wait till you were with us to choose which way we should go."

"I was just telling Dream that I was worried we might get lost," George added as he frowned, "We might not remember the path out."

"Wait! I have something that can help with that," Bad said cheerfully as his face brightened. Dream and George shared a look. Bad rummaged in his pack for a moment and pulled out a can, "It's white spray paint! We can use it to mark the paths we took!"

"Nice Bad!" Dream beamed and George laughed brightly, "And it's a color that George can see easily!"

George stopped laughing to look at Dream in surprise. Dream was still beaming at Bad but something about the way he said that, like he considered George *immediately*, made George feel warm all over. Bad just laughed and nodded as he gave the can an experimental shake and proceeded to carefully spray an arrow behind them to mark the way they came.

"Alright," Dream grinned after Bad was done, "I say we go down the left."

"Why the left?" George asked curiously, studying Dream. He rolled his eyes when Dream just shrugged.

"It doesn't really matter," Bad said slowly as he studied both paths, "You can't tell which is better by just looking. Let's just go left."

"Okay," George shrugged himself. Bad had a point after all. George moved his torch out a little bit to make sure he could see around him considerably as they all moved carefully down to the left with Dream in front of them.

They descended in the left tunnel without any problems and Dream gasped, "I think I see some gold ores!"

"Really?!" Bad and George exclaimed simultaneously before looking at each other in shock. Dream wheezed, nodding his head. Dream led them to where he saw the gold ores and sure enough, George saw them too. He glanced around warily but didn't see any hidden mobs. Dream immediately went to mining the ores and George felt brave enough to look around a bit.

He walked a little further away, but not too far that Dream or Bad couldn't see him, and saw something in the wall. He squinted before he realized what it was. George slowly beamed, "Oh my God, I found more iron!"

"Seriously?!" Bad gasped, his voice squeaking slightly and Dream laughed. George laughed as well, gasping through it, "Our luck might be changing!"

George silently agreed as he cheerfully pulled Bad's pickaxe and started mining as carefully as he

could. The process took longer than it took Dream, but after several long minutes, he finished mining the heavy ores. Dream helped him distribute the ores in each of their packs. They'd been doing that so they could equally distribute the weight and one person wouldn't have to carry a heavy pack.

After a couple more minutes of moving on and searching Bad paused, "Is it just me or does it feel warmer?"

"Now that you mention it I haven't been feeling chilly anymore," George reported with an eyebrow raised. Dream just shrugged it off and George decided that it was probably normal since Dream wasn't worried about it.

They descended a little further before the path was cut off into three sections this time. Dream recommended that just going down in the center path would be easiest and Bad kept marking with his paint as they descended. George noted that, for some reason, Dream was becoming more tense they further down they went.

"Are you okay?" George asked him and Dream looked at him for one long moment before he shrugged.

"Haven't you noticed a lack of mobs? Mobs thrive in the dark yet we've only come across a few zombies," Dream muttered. Bad froze and George stiffened, he hadn't even bothered to think about that, "I just think that's weird is all. They're probably gathered further down so..."

"We should be careful," Bad said grimly, narrowing his eyes in front of them. Dream nodded. The atmosphere became tense as they continued on and George made even more of an effort to study his surroundings, determined not to let any mobs surprise them. Skeletons seemed to be the craftiest at surprise attacks.

It was about twenty minutes later when they found more iron. Dream brightened considerably and began to mine while George stuck close to him, watching the shadows. He felt increasingly paranoid the longer they were in the cave but they almost had enough iron now and they still needed some diamonds to make a pickaxe. Obsidian could only be mined with a diamond pickaxe after all.

"With this we should have enough for three sets of armor," Bad cheered as he stuffed what Dream handed him in his pack.

"Yeah, if not then we can trade some of our food for emeralds and buy more armor if it's not enough," Dream grinned as he looked at Bad, "Let's look for some diamonds for a bit. I don't know how else we could easily get obsidian..."

George smiled at the happy looks on his friends as he watched them but the smile fell from his face when, as he took several steps down ahead of them, the ground felt just a tad warmer under his feet. Dream and Bad were following him absentmindedly and George noticed the gravel they were coming up on.

Increasing warmth...gravel...lava? George's eyes widened and he gasped, launching himself at his two friends, "Wait!"

They both startled but stepped onto the gravel. It immediately began to give out and George watched with horror as his friends began to fall with the gravel. He jumped towards them and threw his hands out, grabbing onto Bad and Dream's hands immediately as they instinctively flailed their arms out to grab onto something.

The gravel continued to fall until it hit dark bubbling lava several feet down below them. The heat from the lava began to feel more real now that the gravel was gone and George's arms trembled as he held onto his friends. Dream's eyes widened as he stared down below, "How did I not realize...?"

"Just...help me out here guys," George gasped out, struggling to pull them up.

"Wait...just pull a little harder George I almost have the ledge!" Bad cried out as he struggled to reach upwards. George huffed, inhaling deeply but pulling as hard as he could. Bad grabbed onto the ledge and began pulling himself up. George was able to use his free hand to help Dream do the same.

As soon as they were both safe on the ground, George fell back and put a hand on his chest. He felt his heart racing and tried to breathe in deeply. Dream was panting for breath too but he didn't seem nearly as panicked as he should have been. Instead he looked worried for *George*. This made him want to laugh hysterically, "I'm sorry George...I wasn't paying enough attention. I should have noticed we were getting closer to a lava pool."

"Me too...you really saved us there George," Bad laughed nervously and stood on shaking legs, "We should continue but avoid going too far down. I've heard that diamonds are commonly found close to lava."

"Right but please be careful and watch for gravel or anything that could give way if you step on it," George cautioned quietly, his heart finally calming down, "I don't think I can handle that happening again. We were lucky."

"Yeah," Dream trailed off as he stood and brushed his fingers together before grinning at George, "Lucky we have *you*."

George blushed, frowning at Dream, "Stopppp..."

Dream laughed, wheezing slightly as he came closer to George and stuck his hand out to help him up. George stared at him for a second before taking his hand. Dream helped him up slowly and George noticed Dream staring at him again, "Thanks George..."

"No problem. Someone has to save your sorry butt apparently," George joked and Dream laughed again. George was left wondering what his face looked like behind the mask when he laughed.

Bad cleared his throat and both boys looked over at him. He was smirking at them for some reason and George lifted an eyebrow at him. There was some knowing look in his eyes and it honestly confused him. Why was Bad looking at them like that? He blinked out of his thoughts when Dream moved away and he went to follow.

"Let's keep going," Dream said seriously as he eyed the tunnel, "Watch your step though."

They only dared to go a little deeper and to their surprise, there were more mobs. There were never more than 3 at a time and that made them easier to fight. It was mostly zombies and there was an occasional skeleton or spider. The first time they came across a spider, Dream watched George *freak out* and he could help but wheeze the entire time Bad killed the spider.

"Stop laughing at me Dream," George complained, his accent thick as he talked, "I don't see spiders very often!"

"*Obviously*," Dream cried, hugging himself as he laughed and wheezed. George rolled his eyes at him, pouting in such a cute way that made Dream's cheeks feel a little warm, "I'm *sorry* George but

that scream you did sounded so hilarious I'm gonna be laughing about it for *days!*"

George actually growled at him in embarrassment and Dream laughed harder. Bad was shaking his head at them good-naturedly, his expression one of amusement. Dream found that George's screams were just as amusing as his blushes. He liked when George screamed.

"Ugh, whatever," George groaned as Dream kept laughing, "We need to be finding some stupid diamonds!"

"Diamonds are pretty hard to find," Bad sighed before smiling slightly, "But maybe we'll get lucky soon. Let's try down here!"

Dream made himself stop wheezing to look at where Bad was pointing. It was down the left a bit. There were running out of options and, honestly, Dream was feeling a bit tired. He could tell George and Bad were too. It was the afternoon when they found the cave so he knew it was probably dark outside now.

"You're right, Bad," Dream said, "Let's just keep going. We have to turn around soon or risk sleeping down here."

"I'm not sleeping down here," George said immediately and Dream could tell he was actually spooked by the idea. His eyes were wide. Dream smiled softly at him.

"We won't," He murmured in what he hoped was a reassuring tone. George glanced at him and smiled slightly. They didn't say anything else after that and followed Bad down the path after he'd marked it. Dream studied the wall with his torch intently. He was beginning to feel impatient again.

They were so close to having what they needed. They had plenty of coal and enough iron to be smelted, but how in the world were they supposed to get obsidian to make a nether portal if they had no diamond pickaxe to mine obsidian with? The whole thing was starting to give him a headache.

"Wait a minute," George trailed off and Dream whirled around to look at him immediately. Bad froze and turned to him expectantly as well, "Do you guys see that?"

They looked to where he was looking and Dream saw it. There was something bluish tucked into the upper corner of the path. Dream inhaled sharply and ran forward, startling them. He moved the torch closer and, to his delight, he noticed the ores were aqua in color, "Oh my God. It's diamonds!"

"What?!" Bad cried in shock. George gasped, stunned. Dream turned to him with an amused smirk.

"How do you keep finding things? Aren't you supposed to be colorblind?" He teased and George blinked at him before rolling his eyes and grinning.

"So what? I wasn't sure it was diamonds I just saw some color," George explained as his expression morphed into awe, "I can't believe we found some!"

Dream immediately got his pick out and carefully began mining, "Hopefully its enough for a pickaxe!"

"Here I'll hold my torch closer so you can see better and not miss a thing!" Bad cheered as he moved closer. George and Dream laughed at that.

A few minutes passed as Dream mined and his arms felt like they might start shaking soon from all the mining he'd done. Just as he finished and leaned back, he caught some movement to his right. Bad immediately noticed the change in his expression and stiffened. Dream quickly stuffed the diamonds in his pack before withdrawing his sword.

"There's something?" George whispered quietly as he drew his own weapon, looking from Dream to the shadows wearily. Dream nodded instead of verbally replying and all three of them froze when they heard some rattling. The telltale signs of a skeleton.

A second after that, an arrow shot right past Dream and Bad. The three were immediately ducking and Dream threw his torch forward with just enough strength so they could see further ahead and the skeleton was lit into view instantly.

Dream jumped as soon as he caught sign of the skeleton. It was arming another arrow but Dream ducked when he shot it and quickly slammed the skeleton down and smashed his skull with his foot.

"Dream, behind you!" George shouted and Dream whirled around to see a couple of zombies coming towards him, letting out groans. Dream cursed under his breath. How did he not hear them before?

Another arrow whizzed past him but this time it hit a zombie right in the eye. It fell over dead in an instant. Dream flashed Bad a look of gratitude before he rushed to take care of the other one. George was running after him with his own sword drawn. Another zombie came out of the dark and while Dream was finishing his opponent he grinned when George leapt in front of him and swung his sword in a wide arch, slicing the last zombie's head clean off.

"Nicely done," Dream complimented feeling proud and the pleased blush that graced George's face nearly bewitched him.

"Those skeletons sure are annoying," Bad sighed behind them and they turned around to face him. He looked at them with a tiny smile and crossed his arms once he reached them "At least we found some diamonds. We should probably leave since our packs are kinda full and heavy with these ores."

"Yeah," Dream nodded, feeling incredibly tired now.

They went to move the way they came until they suddenly heard a hissing sound. Dream and George whirled around to look behind them and George paled at the sight of a familiar yellowish creeper. Dream yanked George towards him but they didn't have enough time to run far enough away.

The creeper blew up and the intense blast blew them back. Dream hissed in pain at the burns he could already feel and he hit the ground on his shoulder hard enough to leave a bruise. To his horror, the ground under him crumbled in the same second he hit the ground and he fell through with a shout.

Dream awoke with a sharp gasp that immediately made him cough. His throat felt so dry. He hissed in pain at the throbbing he felt in shoulder and legs. For a moment he was disoriented. He sat up slowly and brushed off the dirt, dust, and slight debris off his body before he remembered what exactly happened.

A creeper snuck up on them when their backs were turned. It exploded and he fell through the

floor. Dream shot up on his feet and groaned at the throbbing that caused, but he ignored that to study his surroundings. His pack was still on his back and his torch had fallen a few yards away from him, lighting up the area. There was debris everywhere and when he looked up, he could see the massive hole the creeper's explosion created.

"George?! Bad?!" Dream called out and bit back a cough he felt coming. He winced as he walked forward and grabbed his torch, looking around frantically for his two friends. The size of that hole above him told him that his friends had to have fallen with him.

He walked around a big pile of debris and Dream froze at the sight that greeted him. George was lying awkwardly on the floor, his limbs sprawled out and his chin lying against his chest in an awkward angle. There was blood on the stone wall behind his head. Dream choked, "*George!*"

Dream launched himself towards George and knelt by his side, placing the torch down close enough to where he could see. George's skin looked pale and Dream gently picked him up to lay him flat on the floor. He felt absolutely panicked at the sight of fresh blood on the back of George's head. At some point while he was falling George must have hit his head pretty hard.

"George? George!" Dream called out desperately, shaking him slightly. His hands began shaking. What was he supposed to do? Dream shrugged off his pack and hurriedly turned George over on his stomach, being mindful of his head and neck. His breath hitched at the blood matting George's brown hair. He knew that head wounds tended to bleed a lot but...

Dream noticed briefly that George still had his pack on him and carefully pulled it off the smaller male before rummaging inside it for George's pile of wool bandages. He carefully inspected the back of George's head, pressing down with his fingers where he dared and George let out a pained groan. Dream's heart flipped in his chest but his fingers eventually found the tear in George's scalp that was the cause of all the blood. He didn't think it needed stitches.

"Bad?" Dream called out, trying to swallow back his panic. He hadn't heard from their other friend and hoped that he wasn't in the same situation as George was. Dream pressed a heavy wool bandage on George's head wound and carefully wrapped another longer bandage around his head to keep it in place. That would have to do for now to stop the bleeding and keep it from getting dirty.

George groaned again but this time louder and he shifted. Dream froze and carefully turned George over on his back, "George? Can you hear me? Are you awake?"

It took a moment but George's face scrunched up and his eyes opened a tad. Dream felt a little relieved that George was no longer unconscious, "Don't make sudden movements George. You banged your head up really good."

Dream watched George's eyes open a little wider but they were slightly glazed and George looked *so* confused for moment as he stared back up at Dream, "....who are you?"

A rock dropped into Dream's stomach, "What do you mean, Georgie? It's Dream."

George's eyes cleared a little but Dream winced when he noticed George's pupils weren't reacting like they should. He must have a pretty bad concussion, not that that's surprising, "Dream...? But your mask isn't..."

Dream's eyes widened when he realized why George was so confused. Dream placed a hand on his face immediately and was shocked that he didn't notice he'd lost his mask earlier. He was so wrapped up in his panic that he didn't even realize he wasn't wearing his mask anymore. He looked down at George in shock and George's face was blank as he studied him.

A wave of self-consciousness hit him but he forced himself to ignore that and helped George sit up. George hissed in pain and moved slowly before he stopped altogether, "I...I feel sick can we stop for a second?"

A little alarmed, Dream nodded quickly and helped George lay his head down on Dream's thigh instead of sitting up. George sighed shakily and Dream frowned worriedly at him, "Are you okay, George?"

"I-I think so. Sorry, I just need a minute," George swallows heavily and Dream smiled as he gently moved his fingers through George's hair.

"Don't be sorry. It's okay," Dream said softly and George sighed again in relief.

"Are you okay, Dream?" George asked as he glanced up at him without moving his head too much. Dream smiled genuinely as a rush of affection washed over him. George was in a lot of pain and he was asking if *Dream* felt alright? What was he gonna do with this guy?

"I'm okay...I think we all got burned a little and I'm definitely bruised but otherwise okay," Dream explained and George smiled, "I haven't seen Bad yet. There was so much debris everywhere."

George's smile fell and he looked worried, "M-Maybe he's okay..."

"We'll get up as soon as you think you can handle it," Dream assured and George stared at him. After a moment passed and George was still staring at him, Dream felt himself blush, "What...? Do you think I'm that horrible looking?"

He'd said it as a joke but his voice sounded off with nervousness and he hoped George was too concussed to tell. He blinked when George flashed him a dopey smile, "*You're so pretty.*"

P-Pretty? George thought he was pretty?! Dream laughed, feeling a bit embarrassed but dared not let it show, "Not as pretty as you Georgie!"

George flushed a red color that made Dream feel warm and he grinned, "You're probably not gonna remember anything when you get better anyways."

"Huh?" George asked stupidly. Dream was about to answer when he heard something in the distance. He went to grab his sword when the noise became more distinct.

"DREAM! GEORGE! Someone please answer me!"

Dream's heart leapt into his throat in joy at hearing Bad's voice.

"Bad! Over *here*!!" Dream called loudly and George winced. Dream rubbed his thumb on George's cheek, "Sorry, George."

"Dream!" Bad exclaimed and the voice came closer. Bad practically ran around the corner that Dream came from initially and gasped when he saw them sitting here, "Oh my God are you guys *okay*?! What happened?!"

"I'm okay but George banged his head pretty bad," Dream frowned. Bad paled as he knelt and checked George over frantically, "There's a cut on the back of his head but I don't think it needs stitches. I already bandaged it."

"He definitely has a concussion," Bad bit his lip as he looked into George's eyes.

"Don't talk about me like I'm not here," George said heavily and Bad blinked in surprise but he smiled in relief to hear George talking.

"How are you feeling now George?" Dream questioned as he raised an eyebrow at him. George stared at Dream again and smiled for some reason.

"I'm just *amazing*," He grinned and Dream laughed, shaking his head.

"He's definitely concussed," Dream teased and he frowned when he saw Bad studying him. It hit him again that he wasn't wearing his mask. He quickly looked away.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to stare," Bad said gently and Dream peeked at him. He gasped when Bad pulled Dream's mask out of his pack, "I found this in the debris when I was looking for you two. I panicked when I saw it and not *you*."

"Thanks," Dream sighed heavily in relief as he took his mask and looked it over. There were scuff marks on it but it wasn't broken or even cracked. He immediately strapped it back on his face and felt his whole body relax. When he looked down, he jolted when he saw George pouting at him.

"Noo, I want to see you more. Your pretty face!" He complained and Bad burst out laughing. Dream flushed but laughed happily.

"Whatever you say Georgie," Dream teased before he looked at Bad, "Let's get out of here. I'll carry George on my back if you can carry my pack for me?"

"Sure," Bad beamed as Dream handed over his pack to him. Dream carefully helped George sit up and put George's pack back on his shoulders.

"Alright George, wrap your arms around my neck," Dream ordered and George blinked those glazed eyes at him hazily before he did as he was told. Dream felt his heart race as George shuffled closer to him and squeezed his neck, "Don't choke me, George, jeez."

The little giggle George let out sent heat straight through him. God, George was going to kill him at this rate. He was so glad to have the mask back on his face to at least save him some embarrassment. He stood slowly and laughed when George squeaked in fear and wrapped his legs around Dream's waist. Dream tried not to focus on that.

"Hold on tight, okay? I need both my hands to climb outta here," Dream explained as he looked right into George's face.

"Okay," George said hesitantly. Dream shared a look with Bad.

"I'm good. I can climb out of here after you do," Bad smiled and Dream smiled back, briefly checking the other over since he didn't do that earlier. Bad seemed a bit scratched up here and there but nothing alarming stood out to him.

Dream drew his attention to the stone wall and began climbing up the debris to get as high as he could. After that it was a bit easier but a slow process to climb up to where they were before. Once he grabbed the ledge he huffed with effort as he pulled him and George up. He immediately scooted them both a safe distance away so Bad could climb up.

"You still good George?" Dream asked as he glanced at the smaller male. He was still pale and his face was creased with pain.

"My head really hurts Dream..." George whispered as he shoved his face in Dream's shoulder.

Dream winced and then felt his heart ache at George's words.

"It'll be okay, George," Dream soothed as he rubbed gentle circles on top of George's head. At that moment he saw Bad carefully climb up to join them and sighed in relief. They were out. He carefully stood again.

"Let's get the *hell* out of here," Dream scowled. Bad shot him a look.

"Language!"

They were completely out of the cave almost forty minutes later thanks to the markings Bad left. Dream started their campfire as Bad took a look at George's head wound. Bad surprised Dream by wiping some tree sap onto George's wound that he'd gotten from one of the trees around the. Bad claimed it helped with swelling and can stop the wound from bleeding or becoming infected. He rewrapped George's wound and by then, Dream had the fire going and some fish cooking.

Dream laid against a spruce tree with George's head in his lap after they ate. George barely ate any of his fish but Bad didn't seem worried about that, "He might end up vomiting and that's normal for this type of head wound."

"I'm gonna try to get some sleep since you are obviously not sleeping anytime soon," Bad teased and Dream rolled his eyes but didn't feel offended at all, "It's important that you try to keep George awake as long as you can. Just in case."

"I'm right *here*," George complained but his voice still sounded a bit off. His eyes had cleared up some though and Dream felt relieved to know George wasn't so out of it anymore.

"I'll do my best. Goodnight Bad," Dream grinned. Bad chuckled as he laid out his bed roll and scooted inside. Dream glanced down and watched George for a second, "Still feeling nauseous, Georgie?"

"A little," George admitted as he curled into himself more, "Sorry for using your leg...it just feels better than laying anywhere else right now."

Dream put his hand on George's head, smiling down at him, "You're not bothering me, George."

It was quiet for a few minutes but it wasn't awkward. It finally felt peaceful. Dream kept glancing down at George to make sure he wasn't falling asleep. Bad was already out like a light and his gentle snores could be heard against the stark silence. Dream watched as George shuffled around a bit and looked up at him.

"Dream can I ask you something?" George asked quietly, almost like a whisper. There was something about his expression that worried Dream a little but he nodded, smiling reassuringly. George stared at him, "Earlier today when Bad asked us about love...you looked really sad and its been bothering me. What happened to that person you were in love with?"

Dream couldn't help his physical reaction. He gasped slightly and cringed. There was a pang in his chest. He frowned and swallowed down intense emotions that memories brought forth. When Dream glanced down at George, his eyes widened to see George looked upset, "I was 15 and there was this girl...her name was Sam."

Dream shivered, feeling fresh betrayal and anger. George frowned, something flashing in his eyes, "She was one of the prettiest girls in the village and I had a crush on her. I was always doing stupid things to impress her. When she asked me out I was so happy and felt incredibly lucky she

chose *me*. I couldn't understand why Sapnap didn't like her though."

"Sapnap didn't like her...?" George asked quietly, his face almost blank. Dream nodded.

"We fought about it once," Dream admitted as George's eyes widened, "He said that he thought Sam was shallow and selfish and I didn't understand how he saw that in her. Sapnap said Sam was dating me because I was well-liked by everyone in the village and due to my looks. I didn't believe him."

"What happened Dream?" George questioned as he stared directly into Dream's eyes. Dream gulped.

"We went out for a few months and I thought things were great but she started getting really weird. She was possessive of the time I spent with her. She didn't like when I spent time with Sapnap and that struck a cord with me. She began to try and guilt-trip me that I didn't care about her because I didn't listen to her...crap like that..."

"Wow," George wrinkled his nose and Dream laughed slightly, there was something cute about the way George wrinkled his nose. He did that sometimes when he laughed too.

"It was something I thought we could work out though," Dream shrugged before sighing, "Then one day this wandering traveler came and was staying in our village for a few days. Apparently during that time, I'm not even sure how they met, Sam cheated on me with him."

"She cheated on you?" George asked as he blanched and Dream felt his heart skip a beat when George looked pissed. Like really angry. Dream blinked at him.

"Uh...yeah. I walked in on them kissing. When I confronted her she was very cruel about it. She said I couldn't give her the life she wanted so she was leaving with him. She said he was more attractive than me and would put her first," Dream sighed again, heavily this time. George frowned sadly, "It really hurt at the time. She left with him the next day and Sapnap was really good to me about it. He never once mentioned an I told you so."

"He's a good friend," George replied and then he scowled, "I really wish I could have grown up with you and Sapnap. I never would have let her get away with treating you like that Dream."

Dream felt his heart swell and he smiled warmly at George, "Oh really? You'd have stuck up for me, Georgie~?"

"I would *never* have let her hurt you like that," George affirmed, his eyes shining with emotion, "You didn't deserve that Dream."

"George..." Dream trailed off, feeling himself choke on emotions he felt. He swallowed heavily, staring back into George's eyes, "Thank you...I love you..."

Dream wasn't sure if George heard him because George started scowling again, "I don't like hearing about her Dream."

"Okay George," Dream laughed happily, "You asked though."

"Yeah but I don't like it," George insisted in a daze and Dream laughed again, rubbing his fingers through George's hair, "You seem like you really loved her and she was so cruel to you. I hate her."

"Well I *thought* I loved her," Dream shrugged as he stared at George, "Thinking back on it now, I didn't care about her the way you *should* care about someone you love."

"Really?" George rose an eyebrow, looking dazed and confused. Dream grinned at him, "Well okay I guess..."

Dream watched George stare off in thought and smiled down at him. He felt like he had an epiphany at his own words. When he was 15 he thought he knew what love was when he was with Sam but back then he didn't care about Sam the way he cares about George now. He didn't feel the insane need to make her happy and keep her safe. Sam never made him feel cared about the way George did. Sam never actually made him feel happy. They fought most of their relationship.

Dream stared at George. He thought back on how he liked making George blush and the reactions he got out of George. Dream thought George was *really* cute and he knew you wouldn't have these types of thoughts for a friend...he didn't feel that way with Bad or Sapnap. He wasn't dumb, he knew what it meant.

He was falling in love with George. A real and lasting type of love that he *thought* he'd felt at 15.

And there was only one problem with that. George was just barely learning what it meant to have a *friend*. He wouldn't know how to handle someone approaching him romantically. Dream would scare George away, possibly for good. There was no way in hell that was happening.

Dream could and *would* reign in his growing feelings until he could be sure George would accept him that way. Losing George wasn't an option.

Chapter End Notes

This is supposed to be a slow burn (meaning they reach romance level at a realistic pace) but this is my first time writing a slow burn. I figured it made sense for Dream to realize his feelings first due to having a relationship and certain type of feelings before.

George on the other hand has been isolated since childhood and didn't even really have a friend so it makes sense, to me anyways, that he's dense about these things.

Does that make sense? Let me know what you think. Was Dream's realization about his feelings realistic or out of nowhere? I'm all for improving!

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Bad, George, and Dream finally find another village only it's not what they expect. George struggles with the aftermath of remembering Dream's face.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I hope you are all doing well! I'm so happy to see so many kudos and bookmarks for the story, thank you so much!

Also special thanks to sgibs and Kasiwi for commenting feedback and easing my worries about my slow burn progress! All you that are commenting are amazing!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There were two things George noticed when he woke up. One being that there was a dull pounding ache in his tender head and another being that he was staring directly into the piss yellow color of his friend's hoodie. George blinked, unable to remember how he got in the position he was in now. His face was almost pressed into Dream's chest and his friend's arms were wrapped around him in a lazy hug. Their legs also seemed to be tangled together.

He looked up hesitantly and saw the smiley-faced mask his friend always wore; seeing it brought back a flash of memory. Dream calling his name in a panicked tone. George opening his eyes to see a stranger, a man with flattering features, hovering over him. The man had an angular jawline and a nose that looked like it'd been broken once. The man's lips were full enough without being too plump and he had a small galaxy of freckles forming a bridge from the top of his cheeks and over his nose.

He was the prettiest person George had seen. It wasn't until the man started talking and flashed concern in his darkish yellow eyes that George realized it was Dream.

Oh my God it was *Dream*! George flushed hotly as he blinked out of his thoughts and stared at the mask. His head pounded and ached. He cringed, biting back a groan. He thought back to what else he remembered. It all seemed so vague.

George remembered that they were in the cave and got surprised by a creeper. He'd hit his head at one point then he was helped by a maskless Dream. Things got a fuzzy after that. He distantly remembered talking with Dream about his ex-lover, Sam.

He scowled, thinking back on the sad expression that formed on Dream's face when he talked about her. George had been curious but the longer Dream talked about his ex-lover the worse he felt.

"George...?"

George gasped lightly, turning his head slowly to see Bad squatting next to their campfire. There was something sizzling on the fire and it smelled like pork, "Bad..."

"Hey, how are you feeling?" Bad asked quietly, his eyes flicking to Dream. George glanced at Dream as well and relaxed when he realized Dream wasn't awake yet.

"My head is pounding," George sighed, shifting a bit. Dream's arms tightened around him in response and he glanced at Dream's masked face again wondering why such a small action made him feel kind of giddy.

"That's normal...do you feel nauseous or lightheaded at all?" Bad questioned worriedly and George looked at him with a small smile, mentally shaking himself for his thoughts.

"No to both," He replied and watched in amusement as Bad sighed in relief.

"You really worried us...Dream especially," Bad smiled as they both looked at the taller male again, "He kept watch over you most of the night...he panicked when you passed out on him."

"I...what?" George tilted in his head in confusion.

"He woke me up *freaking out* because you passed out on him at one point last night," Bad laughed quietly, "I told him to keep you awake as long as possible and I guess he panicked when you passed out. I had to calm him down."

"I don't remember passing out," George commented but smiled at what he was told, "Dream is a worrywort...you *both* are."

"Rightfully so! Head injuries are no joke George," Bad frowned and George went silent, "I'm checking it as soon as you're able to escape Dream's octopus grasp."

George couldn't help the laugh that bubbled out of him at that and Dream shifted, causing him to bite back his laugh. If Dream was up with him most of the night then George wanted to let Dream sleep as long as possible. However, he couldn't just lay in his friend's arms that long no matter how comfortable and warm he was.

"The pork chops are almost ready and I'm cutting us up some apples to eat with it," Bad spoke up and George looked at him curiously, "I hope you don't mind I took some of your apples though."

"They're for *everyone* Bad," George replied softly in amusement. He began to try and wiggle out of Dream's hold. It took a solid two minutes before George was able to worm his way out of Dream's grip. Bad laughed at him behind his hand the whole time, "Stop laughing, Bad. You were no help!"

"What was I supposed to do?" Bad grinned, his eye twinkling with amusement, "You guys are so cute."

George rolled his eyes and stood from the ground slowly. The ache in his head increased a little, making him pause and cringe until it settled down to a duller ache.

"Here," Bad said as he handed out some cut apple, "Eat this while I look at your wound."

"Fine," George sighed, walking over to carefully sit crisscross in front of Bad. He began munching on the apple slices Bad cut for him while Bad unwound the bandage around his head. A thought occurred to him, "Hey, you guys are okay, right? From the creeper explosion I mean..."

"Yeah!" Bad cheered quietly, "We all had some minor burns to the back of our legs. I was okay because I was the furthest away. Dream banged up his shoulder and it's bruised pretty bad but he's okay too."

George let out a relieved sigh as his chocolate brown eyes flicked to Dream, "That's good...did anything else happen after that? My memory is kind of fuzzy."

Bad hummed, sounding slightly concerned, "Nothing really. Dream carried you out and we made camp right here. Then after that I went to sleep first since Dream was supposed to keep you up as long as he could."

George hissed when Bad accidentally touched a tender part of his head, "Sorry George. I was just making sure the wound was scabbing over."

"It's okay..." George trailed off, finishing the apple slices. Bad rewrapped a clean wool bandage around George's head before he leaned back to check the pork on their campfire.

Things were silently peaceful up until they heard Dream groan. George almost whipped his head around at the noise and gasped from the pain that caused. Dream moved one of his arms, patting his hand at the empty space by his side for only a second before he pushed himself up quickly, "*George?*"

George bit back a grin at the sleepy panic on Dream's face, "Over here, Dream."

Dream's eyes immediately landed on George and he watched Dream relax. The taller male instantly scrambled up to sit by George and was staring at him, "How are you feeling? Is your head okay? Do you feel sick?"

"Jeez, I'm okay Dream," George laughed lightly, feeling oddly happy. He laughed again when he saw the wide smile of amusement on Bad's face as the other male made no attempt to hide it, "My head still kinda hurts but I don't feel sick anymore."

"That's good," Dream sighed in relief before he paused and looked over at George again, "What do you remember from last night?"

"Almost everything," George shrugged and lifted a brow when Dream tensed, "What?"

"Nothing..." Dream trailed off, oddly nervous. He was fidgeting with his fingers anxiously and pulling at the hem of his hoodie a little. George blinked at him.

"Are you worried that I saw you without your mask on?" George blurted in a blunt tone. He then blushed at what he asked. Dream's mouth parted and he glanced at George in shock.

"So you remember that?" Dream asked in a hesitant tone.

"Yeah and I think I remember my embarrassing moments," George groaned hiding his face with his hands, "I think I called you pretty at one point and oh my *God*."

Dream laughed, sounding much more relieved now and it made George smile. Bad joined in on the laughter and spoke up, "You pouted so much when Dream put the mask back on because you wanted to look at him."

"Ugh, stop, no I didn't," George groaned, protesting. Dream began wheezing and although George did feel embarrassed about what he remembered he was just glad that Dream wasn't nervous anymore.

"Anyways," Bad chuckled before gesturing to their campfire, "The pork chops should be finished. Let's dig in!"

Bad distributed the food and while they ate, George kept glancing at Dream. Memories of Dream's face kept flashing to his mind and it made him oddly nervous. He paused when Dream turned to look at George and George blushed when their eyes met. He quickly looked away, missing Dream's smile.

"We should get a head start and try to find a village today," Bad suddenly said and George flicked

his eyes to him. Bad was just finishing his meal but also looking at Dream's map, "Surely we can't be too far from one."

"Let's hope not," Dream grinned, "It'll be hard to carry all this weight for days at a time."

The reminder of what Bad said about Dream's shoulder suddenly came to mind and George turned to Dream quickly, "Hey, Bad said you hurt your shoulder. Is it bad? You might not want to carry anything today!"

He thought it was something normal to be worried about but Dream looked briefly surprised as he glanced at George before his expression turned warm, making butterflies form in his stomach- *how weird.*

"Oh, I'm okay. There's a pretty big bruise but I can carry my pack on one shoulder," Dream smiled as he shrugged his good shoulder. Bad nodded so George figured Bad already checked Dream's shoulder.

"O-Okay," George stammered, looking away from Dream to stare at the ground. He still felt eyes on him and he knew it had to be Dream.

"Are you guys done eating? We should use as much daylight as we can," Bad said seriously as he slowly stood, "Since you're both injured I'm assuming you won't be doing spar practice until you heal, right?"

"Yeah that can wait," Dream replied, equally as serious. George tensed when Dream placed a hand on his shoulder, "You'll let us know if you feel sick or your head starts hurting bad, right?"

"Uh, yeah I will," George agreed, almost forgetting not to nod. He couldn't quite bring himself to look Dream in the eyes. Dream withdrew his hand and stood.

"Then you ready to go Georgie?" Dream asked cheerfully and George smiled, looking at his mask but not quite at his eyes. He imagined Dream's expression behind the mask.

"I'm ready," George said softly as he stood slowly and helped Bad put out their campfire while Dream packed up their bed rolls. They packed the rest of their things and eventually they decided to continue heading North.

Unlike the day before, there wasn't a single cloud in the sky. George wished his head wasn't hurting so he could enjoy the nice weather more. For now, his already sensitive eyes felt even more sensitive thanks to his injury. He spent most of the time staring at the ground as they walked to avoid the sun rays.

They'd already been walking for almost two hours. All three of them seemed content with the silence that surrounded them. Bad was cheerfully humming as he looked around with a daydreaming look to his green eyes. George noticed an hour ago that Dream had a knife and a bone in his hands; he was carving into the bone with his knife. George had no idea what he was doing.

Finally his curiosity got the better of him and he squinted at Dream, "Hey, Dream, what are you doing exactly?"

Dream didn't look up from carving into the bone, "I'm making something..."

"What are you making?" George tilted his head with interest. He remembered when Dream collected the bones and promptly forgot why he'd done so.

"It's a secret Georgie," Dream smirked, glancing at him. George felt himself blush and immediately look away. Why did it seem so much harder to look Dream in the eyes? "How are you feeling?"

George rolled his eyes. Dream had been periodically asking him that since they started walking. It was endearing at first but now it was almost annoying, "I'm alright. You don't have to worry."

Dream simply hummed under his breath in acknowledgment and returned his attention to what he was doing before. George glanced at Bad, who immediately looked away from them. He blinked. Was Bad just watching them? He does that a lot.

It went quiet again and George played with the end of his hoodie sleeves as they walked. At one point he noticed Bad grab a book out of his pack and he actually started reading while walking. How the hell can they do something and walk without watching where they were going?

Apparently he was gaping because Dream started chuckling and when George peeked at him, Dream was staring at him, "What's that face for?"

"You...you guys aren't looking where you're going," George explained incredulously and Dream wheezed.

"We can multi-task," Dream told him and grinned at him in a teasing way while Bad chuckled once in the background, "Poor clumsy Georgie can't do something and walk at the same time?"

"W-What?! I mean...a lot of people can't-" George cut himself off when Bad joined Dream in laughing harder. George's cheeks warmed, "Whatever...I'll be the one laughing when one of you fall."

"I won't fall," Dream smirked confidently and George felt his eyebrow twitch in annoyance.

"Coming from the guy who almost fell through gravel into a lava pool yesterday," George taunted and Dream's eyes widened as he spluttered.

"Well that was...I wasn't paying attention then," Dream pouted and George let out a chuckle. Dream's face brightened a little.

"You aren't paying attention *now*," George replied in a teasing tone and Dream rolled his eyes.

Contradictory to his own words, George didn't notice Bad come to a sudden stop in front of them and face planted into his friend's back. Dream steadied him, looking equally surprised at the sudden stop, "Bad?"

"Sorry," Bad apologized as he turned to look at George over his shoulder. He was beaming, "I think I see a village over there!"

"Wait, what?!" Dream and George gasped simultaneously. Dream continued as he squinted, "Where?"

"I think I see the edges of a couple of houses in that forest there," Bad told them as he pointed to the left a little.

They entered another plains biome about forty minutes earlier and as George studied where Bad was pointing, he could see hints of cobblestone sticking out.

"Nice Bad!" Dream beamed as he rubbed their friend's head. Bad blinked in surprise at the action before smiling cheerfully. George grinned.

"I wasn't holding out hope we'd actually find one today but oh my gosh!" George said in a giddy tone, "Our lucky really *is* changing."

"Give or take a creeper explosion," Dream added teasingly and George laughed.

"Skeppy used to tell me that excessive good luck means something bad will happen soon..." Bad trailed off, looking so serious suddenly that Dream and George looked at him incredulously.

"I thought you were supposed to be optimistic Bad," Dream snickered loudly and Bad blushed.

"I mean-*yeah*...but I was just saying," Bad stammered before rolling his eyes with a sigh, "Let's just go you muffin-heads!"

George and Dream laughed after Bad as he began jogging away from them and towards the forest. Dream smiled and grabbed George's hand, lacing their fingers together, "C'mon George!"

He gasped when Dream started pulling them along but he found himself unable to verbally answer him. His head swam and his chest felt warm. George peeked at Dream and from the angle he was at he could see the side of Dream's face a little. The warmth from George's chest spread to his face. He quickly looked down at the ground so he wouldn't be caught awkwardly staring at Dream's face.

They quickly caught up with Bad and George couldn't help but notice that Dream kept glancing down at him. He kept his eyes trained on the ground in front of them as they walked. George flicked his eyes to their joined hands and wondered why Dream hadn't let go yet. It was actually almost reassuring to be holding Dream's hand but Dream never usually does that for so long.

"Watch out for skeletons," Dream spoke and George looked up at him. Dream was smirking as he looked between George and Bad, "Wouldn't want to get snuck up on again."

"You say that like *you* haven't been surprised by them too," George muttered and Dream laughed. George cracked a smile.

They were deep in the forest now and Bad seemed to not even hear Dream as he glanced around intently, "I know I saw some cobblestone...it *had* to have been a house. Wasn't it around here?"

"Bad slow down," George huffed in amusement, "We'll find it eventually. We all saw it around this area."

"Right..." Bad sighed as he looked at George. His eyes dropped down to where Dream was holding George's hand and George flushed for some reason. Bad quickly looked away.

George peeked up at Dream and startled when his eyes met Dream's. Was he already looking at George? His cheeks flushed further and he glanced down again, wondering why he felt so embarrassed.

"What's wrong George?" Dream asked and George looked back up at him but avoided looking him straight in the eyes.

"Nothing..." George answered, feeling almost confused and frustrated with himself. He wasn't sure anything *was* wrong but it was increasingly hard for him to look Dream in the eye ever since seeing his face for the first time.

Dream tilted his head but didn't ask further. He squeezed George's hand in his before letting go. George brought his hands together and started playing with the ends of his sleeves. He could still feel the warmth in his hand from where Dream had been holding it.

"Look!" Dream suddenly shouted, making George jump, "I see it! Over there!"

Bad and George looked to where he was gesturing and Bad gasped in delight. From here, you could see brief hints of cobblestone and oak planks hidden in the trees, "Yes! Nice!"

They both took off with George following them at a more leisurely pace. His head was beginning to throb more so he didn't want to jog or run. He noticed them slow down when they got closer and George lifted an eyebrow, going to Dream's side.

"Oh..." George gasped, realizing why they stopped. There was a small home made from cobblestone, oak planks, and oak logs but there were no signs of life anywhere. Webs covered the doorframe, the window panes, and some were tucked in corners of the house.

George glanced to the other house and saw it was pretty much in the same condition. He shifted to look behind the houses and saw a path heading further into the forest. From here you could see a fountain with a gold bell and other homes spread out in the forest.

"I don't see anyone..." Bad trailed off, his eyes wide as he looked around, "Do you guys?"

"No..." George breathed as he also studied their surroundings. It was eerily silent and George shuddered, stepping closer to Dream.

"An abandoned village...?" Dream stated, it coming off as a question. Dream was frowning, "Let's look around and see if we can find anyone..."

"Alright," George hummed, his eyes flicking to the path near the fountain. While Dream walked into the houses by their side, George and Bad walked down the path. George saw Bad and Dream's hands hovering near their weapons and decided to follow their example.

He walked towards the fountain and noted the dust that accumulated on the stone. George glanced around and saw a home to the left of the fountain that had a cobblestone platform with a crafting table, a workbench, two furnaces, and a blast furnace. A blacksmith's home...?

"Bad, I'm checking this one out," George turned to look at his friend over his shoulder. Bad looked grim as he stared at the same home George was looking at. He nodded.

"Okay, I'll be in that one," Bad told him as he pointed at the house across the way, "Looks like Dream is right...this place is abandoned."

George didn't bother answering that. He walked up the cobble stairs and onto the cobblestone platform. Dust and webs covered the furniture and corners. He'd heard of villagers that migrated

from their native village for one reason or the other; the biggest reason being that they didn't feel safe in that location anymore.

Or...or they were just wiped out. George felt his chest tighten and he frowned. There were no evidence of an attack or pillager raid and there weren't any remains either, thank God.

George mentally shook his head from his thoughts and walked into the door adjoining the platform. It was a small home, but quite cozy in George's opinion. There was a cauldron, countertops, and a couch made of wool tucked into one corner. There were two other rooms which seemed small.

Upon inspection, George realized that one was a small bedroom with nothing but a white bed, a cobblestone pit, and a double chest while the other was a small bathroom with a toilet, cauldron, and a small shower tucked in a corner.

He eyed the lever in the shower and flicked it down cautiously. Water cascaded down and George gasped, jumping slightly. He hesitantly pulled his sleeves up and put his hands under the water spray. He shivered, it was cold...but a shower was a *shower*.

"George?"

George gasped, jumping for the second time as he whirled around. He groaned from the pain that caused and put a hand to his head. There was a hand on his shoulder then and George opened his eyes to look at Dream.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to sneak up on you," Dream murmured as he squeezed George's shoulder before letting go, "Looks like you found a good place here."

"The shower works at least," George muttered and Dream snickered softly. Dream reached past George to flick the lever back off and George tried not to blush from the close proximity, "Its cold though."

"Thought you'd be used to bathing in cold water by now," Dream teased as he turned to look at him. George scowled at him and Dream chuckled.

"Did you find anything?" George changed the subject and Dream sighed, shaking his head.

"Molded food and plants," Dream grumbled and George couldn't help but smile, "At least there's a blacksmith station here. We can smelt our ores so that's convenient."

"True," George nodded, his eyes lighting up. He hadn't even thought of that but he probably should have, "We should see if Bad found anything."

He was just about to move when Dream snatched his wrist, startling him. Dream's eyes widened like he was surprised at what he did too, "Uh, wait, I wanted to ask you something."

"What..?" George trailed off, wondering why he felt a tingling of dread deep in his chest. He felt nervous again.

"Are you okay? You seem a little off or like....spaced out?" Dream questioned with a struggling expression on his face, "I don't know...I feel like something's bothering you. You can tell me, you know."

George's eyes widened at him and he could tell Dream looked truly worried about him again. It made him feel warm but at the same time there was that strange nervousness, "I...I'm okay. I guess I am spaced out, sorry."

"But is something bothering you?" Dream asked intently, his eyes pinned on him.

George debated what to say. He didn't even really *know* what was bothering him and that was the problem. George looked up at Dream, shifting uncomfortably when he noticed Dream staring at his face, "Nothing's really bothering me...other than my head."

"Oh..." Dream frowned sadly, "Sorry George...after we make sure this place is safe and cleaned up you'll be able to lay down on one of the beds here."

"It's okay," George smiled slightly, "I don't need to lay down."

Dream let go his wrist and smiled back, "Well...if you say so Georgie. Let's go find Bad."

George followed Dream out of the room and stared at his back. He really needed to get a grip on himself and stop worrying Dream. It felt like he was being bothersome. Dream was always having to accommodate George.

He felt a rush of determination as they left the blacksmith's home and George looked up when he saw a flash of black. Bad was already walking towards them with a blank expression, "I didn't find anything good. What about you guys?"

"We were coming to find you. We didn't find much but there's a blacksmith station here with all the right equipment so we can stay here for the night," Dream explained and grinned when Bad's whole face brightened, "We'll smelt all our ores here overnight and tomorrow."

"That's awesome!" Bad gushed and George smiled, "We can take care of that and then we can try to find another village tomorrow!"

"We might not have too," Dream spoke up with confidence as he glanced behind him, "I'm pretty decent at making armor and weapons. It'll take some time though so if you guys would rather we try to find a village we can do that."

"Well you sound pretty confident," George teased and felt inwardly surprised when Dream's face lit up. Anything else he thought of saying died on his tongue.

"Let's just stay here then," Bad laughed, "I also know a little about blacksmithing so I could try to help you."

George shot him an incredulous look, "Is there anything you *don't* know about?"

Dream and Bad burst out laughing as Bad replied, "Plenty. I just had a lot of time on my hands and I read *all* the time. I spent time studying things I didn't know."

"Cool," Dream complimented and Bad blushed just a little, smiling.

"Thanks," He replied and George felt something funny in his chest again when Dream ruffled Bad's hair playfully.

"So what should we do first?" George cleared his throat and both males looked at him thoughtfully.

"I'll clean up the blacksmithing station and load it up with coal," Dream told them as he stared off, "We need to get to smelting all this iron as soon as possible since it will take awhile to make the armor."

"Sounds good," Bad beamed as he turned to George, "I'll clean up the inside of the blacksmith's house and get it ready so we can safely cook and sleep in there. George why don't you get us some more wood? We're running low."

"Sure," George nodded wondering why Dream's eyes narrowed.

"Just don't go too far out," Dream urged and George felt a nice warmth flood him. He grinned, nodding his head again. Bad chuckled before heading up the platform of the blacksmith's house and disappearing inside.

"I'll leave my pack with you," George said as he glanced at Dream, who was staring at him, "I'll just take my axe and sword with me."

"Okay," Dream smiled after a moment, "I'll be outside cleaning the blast furnace so just scream for

me if something happens."

"Right..." George rolled his eyes but smiled in amusement. He shook his head as he let out chuckles, moving towards some of the trees close by.

George worked slowly, focusing only on chopping wood without too much effort. He ignored the way his head was still aching slightly but there was nothing he could do about it. As he threw more wood in a small pile he had forming on the ground by his feet, George felt eyes on him.

He stood slowly and peeked over his shoulder. George jolted when he saw Dream staring at him from the platform of the blacksmith's house. Dream seemed to pause as he got caught staring and immediately went back to wiping down the blacksmithing equipment. George couldn't help but laugh slightly as he turned to continue chopping wood.

Soon he had a decent pile on the ground and he stopped chopping, sighing deeply. George wiped sweat from his forehead and let his hand rest there, trying not to focus on the small throbs in his head.

After resting like that for a second, George grabbed the pile of wood in his arms and walked back to the blacksmith's house. He stopped on the platform, watching Dream's back as he worked over a blast furnace for a second before George gently put down the pile of wood he chopped just outside the door to the house.

"How's it coming?" George spoke up, surprised when Dream jumped slightly. Dream turned and laughed a little.

"Oh hey, you scared me. It's going pretty good," Dream said with amusement in his tone, "I was a bit lost in thinking for a second there."

"Will the furnaces work?" George questioned, going to stand beside Dream and looking down at what Dream was doing.

"Yeah. Once I finish cleaning them up and put the coal we got in there it should work just fine," Dream replied nonchalantly and then he glanced at George, "How's your head?"

George smiled, "It's okay...just the same actually. The pain flares up when I move my head too much but its just dull throbs...like a constant headache."

"I see," Dream frowned, "I was so worried about you, you know? When I found you I thought it was much worse."

George frowned as well and then his eyes widened as he realized that this whole time he never

thanked Dream for helping him out. George scowled at himself before noticing Dream raising an eyebrow at him, "Dream, I'm sorry I....I just remembered I never thanked you for helping me yesterday..."

"Oh..." Dream blinked at him before laughing, almost wheezing, "You don't have to thank me George. We're friends so of course I'm going to help you!"

George felt warm again but he rolled his eyes, "A decent human should thank people that help them you know, no matter if you're my best friend or not."

He didn't realize what he said at first and flinched when Dream suddenly leaned away from him, his eyes wide behind his mask. George blinked at him, "What?"

"I...I'm your *best* friend? So that means we leveled up already?" Dream teased and George then realized what he said. He turned red but laughed at the way Dream worded that.

"Leveled up? Sure I guess," George laughed out and Dream laughed along with him. After they finished laughing Dream placed one of his hands on George's left forearm.

Dream smiled, "You're my best friend too."

George's eyes widened and he felt like his skin was warm where Dream was touching. He blurted, "But I thought Sapnap was your best friend?"

For some reason Dream bent his head back and laughed joyously, wheezing again. George smiled in confusion because he didn't know why Dream was laughing but his laugh made *George* want to laugh himself.

"You can have more than one best friend George," Dream teased through his laughing and George felt his whole face warm up. Dream chuckled and moved his hand to ruffle George's head just a little but kept his hand there, "I should get back to fixing up these furnaces. Love you Georgie."

George froze, glancing at Dream but Dream was smiling at him. The front door to the blacksmith's house opened then and Bad's voice distracted him, "Oh, George there you are!"

"I'm here," George said awkwardly as he turned to face Bad and felt somewhat odd when Dream dropped his hand away from George's head to continue working, "Is...is that enough wood?"

Bad looked from Dream to George to the wood pile by George's feet. He smiled brightly, "Yup that should do it! Can you carry some in here please?"

"Sure," George smiled back easily and bent over to grab some wood before following Bad inside the house. George paused when he noticed how clean the floors and counters already were. Bad doesn't waste any time it seemed.

"Put the wood in that pit there," Bad gestured and George turned to where he was pointing. He blinked when he noticed the cobblestone pit that was against the wall, hidden from view from the entranceway. That must be why he didn't see it before, "Can you build a fire in there for me? We'll need this place to warm up soon."

"Okay," George agreed, realizing that the pit was a fireplace. He began to work on piling enough wood in the pit so that the fire would be decent, but not too big. The last thing they needed was to burn down the convenient shelter.

After George successfully started the fire, he glanced over at Bad who was unpacking their food supplies and laying them out on the newly cleaned counters, "Anything else I can do to help?"

Bad turned to him thoughtfully, "I've been busy cleaning in here so can you dust off the wool couch and then the bed in the bedroom? I figured we'd sleep here so we'll need those to be clean."

"True," George laughed as he stood slowly. He walked to the wool couch and began to use his hands to sweep dust and little webs off. It was a long process and George almost inhaled dust one too many times.

After he deemed the couch as cleaned to the best of his abilities, George walked off to the bedroom and repeated the process with the white cotton bed in the corner of the room. It went a little easier and he fluffed out the blanket, patting it out to clean it and placed it back on the bed. He did the same with the pillows and leaned back to check his work.

His eyes caught on the cobblestone pit that was in a secluded corner of the room. He'd seen that before, unlike the one in the main room, and smiled. George walked back out into the main room and blinked when he didn't see Bad where he was before.

George went outside to grab more wood and paused when he heard Dream and Bad talking. They halted when George stepped out though, "Uh, is everything okay?"

"Oh yeah, Bad was helping me put in the ores to smelt," Dream grinned and George noticed they were squatting in front of the furnaces, their hands black from handling coal, "It's a slow process so that we don't get burned."

"Be careful," George warned, eyeing the now brightly lit furnaces. Dream laughed and Bad chuckled.

"Sure thing Georgie," Dream winked and George blushed a little, frowning, "What are you up to?"

Bad said you were helping him clean up."

"Yeah I just finished dusting off the couch and the bed. I'm about to get a fire going in the bedroom fireplace so it'll be warm in there tonight," George explained with a small smile forming on his face.

"Speaking of, I was just telling Dream that you guys can take the bedroom and I'll sleep on the couch," Bad grinned and there was something weird about his expression. George noticed Dream shift slightly, "It'll be better than sleeping in bed rolls."

"True but...there's only one bed," George reminded and George wondered what was wrong with the two of them when Bad's weird expression got more intense and Dream was suddenly backtracking, looking more nervous than George had ever *seen* him since meeting him.

"Y-Yeah you can have the bed Georgie and I-I'll just sleep on my bedroll," Dream stammered as he looked into George's face like he was looking for something. George lifted an eyebrow.

"No Dream your shoulder is hurt...not badly but it's pretty bruised. You shouldn't sleep on the floor if you don't have to," George explained and Bad was nodding in agreement. A thought came to George and he decided to test it out, "We can just sleep in the bed together right?"

Like he thought, Dream's eyes widened largely behind the mask and he spluttered, "W-What? You want to share the bed?"

George was immediately embarrassed and concerned. So Dream *was* uncomfortable with that? Was that not something friends did? But Dream was holding him while they slept that morning and George didn't really feel like that was a big deal. Was it actually? "Is that a weird thing to offer?"

"No!" Dream blurted and both boys jumped in their skin when Bad suddenly burst out into loud laughter.

"You guys are something else!" He spoke through laughter as he hugged himself, "You are way to *awkward* about it! There's nothing wrong with sharing the bed George!"

"Uh okay," George replied stupidly, blinking at their black-clad friend before looking to Dream, "But that made you uncomfortable right? I'm sorry. If you don't want to then I'll just sleep in my bed roll."

"No, no it didn't make me uncomfortable," Dream stood up suddenly, looking at him intently and George didn't know how to react, "I was just worried that it made *you* feel obligated or uncomfortable...I don't mind at all."

George smiled then and Dream looked caught off guard. Dream was always so worried about him. He was weird. George felt relieved, however, that he hadn't made Dream uncomfortable just then, "Okay then. I'll get this wood to the fireplace so it can warm up in there."

A warm smile graced Dream's face and George stared at it, an intense feeling of wanting to see Dream's full face smacking him like a cloth to the face. He hesitantly tore his gaze away and bent to grab more wood from his pile before heading inside hurriedly. He heard Bad laughing again as he did.

A lot of things about Dream were confusing but George was determined to learn all there was to know about his new best friend so that he could stop bothering Dream so much. Maybe if he weren't so unused to everything, inexperienced, and easily embarrassed Dream wouldn't feel the need to be so *worried* about him.

George just didn't want Dream to eventually get tired of him.

Chapter End Notes

Yeah George...like that'll happen.


Hope you guys enjoyed the chapter! If anything doesn't make sense then make sure to let me know!

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Things are a bit different with Dream and George meets another stranger. Things get a bit chaotic.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and/or Hanukkah! I might not update next week due to the holidays, so that's just a fair warning! I'm going to be out of town for awhile visiting family! 

Stay safe you guys! I hope you enjoy the chapter and thank you all for your wonderful support

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Days passed into weeks as the boys kept themselves busy. Most of their time was spent helping Dream make their armor with all the iron they smelted. Bad helped mostly in this regard as George didn't know the first thing about making weapons or armor. Instead, George did most of the hunting, fishing, and cooking. He stocked up on wool for bandages and used stone to make arrows with so that they didn't use up their iron supply. George didn't get much time to practice sparring with Dream, though, since Dream was so busy with their armor, so George often tried practicing on his own.

As time passed into the third week, George noticed that Dream was acting differently. He began spending more time with Bad than he did with George and George thought that was normal since, you know, Bad was helping him make their armor...but he slowly realized that Dream was avoiding spending too much time with George and no longer glued himself to George's side.

And that....that made George feel *odd*. Before, Dream would use any excuse to be close to George and wouldn't be afraid to grab his hand or lean on him but now it was like Dream was keeping him at arms length and keeping up a physical wall like he was nervous. George didn't understand the change, had he done something that Dream didn't like? As he thought that, George was reminded that Dream was the blunt type that would tell you exactly how he felt.

The only thing that *didn't* change was the fact that Dream and George still shared a bed at night. There was only one clean and unbroken bed in the abandoned village after all and when George first proposed to share the bed with Dream he wasn't prepared for how concerned Dream was with that. He'd told George that he was only worried for how *he* felt though and true to his word Dream didn't seem too uncomfortable sharing a bed with him.

So then why did things feel so different? Was it something he did?

George finished adjusting his hoodie and equipping his iron sword as well as a bow and some arrows when the door to the bedroom opened. He heard Dream and Bad's conversation stop abruptly when they saw him in the room. George rose an eyebrow at them. That happened a lot. It was as if they were talking about *him*. George internally shook his head. No need to be so paranoid.

"Oh hey Georgie," Dream grinned and George smiled, "We were just grabbing my extra flint and steel from my pack."

"I see," George said slowly, glancing from Dream to Bad, "How's the third set coming along?"

Dream and Bad already completed their armor sets or at least Dream said it was *almost* finished. After all three were made Dream mentioned that he needed to "refine" them. They were currently making *his* armor set. George can still remember the fiery blush he sported when Dream had to take his measurements for the armor.

"Oh its coming along nicely, I think," Dream smirked as he walked over to the end of the bed where his pack laid and started rummaging through it, "Don't worry though I'll try extra hard on this set since its yours~"

George blushed, his heart stuttering a couple of beats and he ducked his head to hopefully hide his blush. He scowled and Dream must have seen *that* because he laughed. Bad suddenly added, "We should be done by the end of the week!"

"Oh...that's cool," George replied with a smile as he turned his attention to their black-clad friend, "Well, I'm about to go hunting again. We're running a little low on meat and I find I have little patience for fishing which is probably why."

Dream and Bad both laughed. Dream stood up with his flint and steel in one hand and regarded George, "I've noticed that. Oh, but don't go too far okay?"

George nodded, smiling at the warmth Dream's concern caused in his chest. Dream smiled back and reached his arm out like he was going to either put it on George's head or shoulder before he froze and let his arm drop. George's heart skipped a beat and he felt that odd sadness. Why was he pulling away again?

"I better get back to work," Dream grinned as if nothing was wrong and it left George wondering if it was just *him* that thought things were a bit different or weird. George briefly nodded in response to Dream's words and glanced over at Bad, who was watching them silently. There was no explicit expression on his face, as if he were expressionless.

"Whelp, let's go then!" Bad suddenly beamed, shooting George a smile before they both left the

room, leaving George lost and a bit confused. George sighed and followed after them, leaving the house. He forced himself not to look at Dream as he walked off the cobblestone platform where they were working and walked on the path towards the woods.

George sighed deeply this time, pushing all his worries to the back of his mind as he grabbed his bow and focused on trying to find some animals to hunt. Dream would reveal whatever is going on in his head if it were something to be worried about. And George was pretty sure that Bad knew whatever was making Dream act oddly given the secret conversations they seemed to have sometimes. They were his friends. They wouldn't keep things from him if it were important for him to know.

At least, that's what George *hoped*.

"Dream, you gotta stop freezing up like that when you're about to touch George," Bad scowled as he stared over at Dream, who was pausing in his work to watch George disappear in the woods. Dream flicked his green eyes into Bad's and frowned.

"I didn't *mean* to," Dream groaned, slumping against the wood frame of the door to the house they've been staying at, "I just start overthinking about how he's gonna react and..."

"I think he's more worried about you pulling away so frequently," Bad deadpanned and rolled his eyes when Dream looked at him in shock.

"You think he notices it that much?" Dream asked nervously, glancing between Bad and the woods where George disappeared. He felt his heart drop into his stomach at the thought that George notices Dream's constant hesitation to touch him.

"Dream..." Bad trailed off, looking almost incredulous, "George might be oblivious and a bit dense, not that it's his fault, but even a *blind* person can see the way you always hesitate around him. And that's with both actions *and* words!"

"Really? It's that bad?" Dream winced, feeling himself flush a bit. He thought about all the times he caught George staring at him or the times George was staring off in space like he was in deep thought. Bad was probably right.

"It is pretty bad, Dream," Bad sighed, putting a hand over his face, "No offense but your behavior is all *over* the place! Sometimes you hesitate, sometimes you don't, and sometimes you flirt with him! George will be confused about how you feel until you tell him."

Dream jolted, his heart immediately racing in a non good way as he thought about George finding out his feelings for him. That still wasn't an option. That could *not* happen! He glanced at Bad, who was staring at him sympathetically. Dream knew he was acting a little odd, but he didn't think he was acting *that* different. It was a week into his different behavior when Bad pulled him aside and asked him what was wrong.

And Dream immediately let all his worries out on Bad, including his feelings for George. He figured Bad probably had a inkling to his feelings anyway, with the way he's been studying them since they met Bad and just as he thought, Bad admitted he already knew about Dream's feelings. He never thought he'd be so relieved to have someone else know about his newfound feelings for George. Bad was really good to him and he was so easy to talk to about it.

"Bad I-" Dream choked on his words and cleared his throat, "I can't tell George about my

feelings...George won't understand..."

"How do you know he won't understand?" Bad asked in a serious tone. Dream frowned, thinking of how to explain his worry exactly.

"Bad, you remember what I told you? George hasn't grown up with friends," Dream explained and Bad frowned sadly this time, nodding his head, "And he admitted that no one has shown interest in him...what am I supposed to do that won't freak him out and ruin everything?"

"I don't know exactly," Bad admitted sheepishly, "I'm not saying that you should confess your feelings for him...but he's going to be so worried and confused if you pull away from him like that."

"I know," Dream mumbled, dropping his head a little. His heart clenched at the idea of making George worried, "I just know that I like being around him and touching him but it's been feeling more and more like I'm taking *advantage* of him."

Bad's expression turned into a worried one, "Why do you say that?"

"Because *I* know my feelings and why I like touching him but *he* doesn't know that," Dream explained before his eyes widened, "That sounds a little wrong saying it like that. I just...he thinks what I do around him is what normal friends do."

"Oh I see now," Bad's eyes lit up in understanding and he frowned, "Well then he just needs to learn the difference in physical contact with a friend and physical contact with a lover."

Bad laughed loudly when Dream's eyes widened further and he blushed so hard that you could almost see it through the white of his smiley-faced mask, "Besides, some of the things you do with George *are* things that friends do."

"Like what?" Dream's lips quivered, trying to get his blush under control. He wasn't expecting Bad to say what he said. Bad looked at him and paused thoughtfully.

"Well, some friends hold hands. Not for as long as you guys do granted but..." Bad began looking sheepish again, "Okay so maybe a lot of what you guys do is more intimate."

Dream closed his eyes and sighed, "Bad, I'm just so scared of him finding out my feelings."

Things were quiet for a moment and Dream opened his eyes, glancing at Bad. His black-clad friend was looking at him blankly, almost expressionless before he sighed softly, "Alright Dream. It's not something that has to be done right away, so don't freak out okay?"

"Okay..." Dream trailed off, already feeling calmer. Bad smiled, "Yeah...its not like he has to know immediately, right?"

"Right," Bad nodded, putting a hand on Dream's shoulder and squeezing comfortingly, "Do things at your own pace! Just don't pull away from him."

"Yeah," Dream nodded, smiling down at Bad, "Thanks Bad. You've been my rock these past three weeks."

"Anything for a friend!" Bad chirped, his expression beaming. Then he turned to their workbench, "Now let's get working again or we'll never finish George's armor by the end of the week!"

"Okay, okay," Dream laughed, stepping away from Bad and grabbing a mallet, "Back to work

then."

George knew he'd gone too deep in the forest when he chased a deer all the way into a plain flower field. George looked around, bewildered. He'd gone from the abandoned village, through the whole forest, and out into a plain field? He groaned when he realized he lost track of the deer. Now what was he going to do? That deer could have fed them for weeks or maybe a *month*!

His attention was stolen by a distant mooing and he blinked when he saw a single cow roaming the field. George resisted the urge to snicker. Was that supposed to be a sign from the universe? He shook his head and aimed his bow carefully. After docking an arrow he muttered an apology to the cow ahead of time before he let the arrow loose. The cow didn't even know what hit it when the arrow pierced it's neck. It immediately cried out and fell over.

George rushed towards the fallen cow and took out a knife to quickly put the animal out of his misery. Just because he was okay with hunting and killing animals, he never killed them for sport and he never wanted them to suffer. George took out the arrow and began wiping it clean. The only problem he had now was moving the cow all the way back to the others. He wasn't supposed to have hunted this far.

Sighing tiredly to himself, George stood and readjusted his equipment before studying the dead animal. There had to be some way that he can move it...

"Oh wow, hello!"

George threw himself back, stumbling on his feet as his heart leapt in his throat. He just about had a heart attack! His brown eyes widened when he saw a man with a large backpack standing at the edge of the forest he, himself, had just come out of. The man had short jet black hair and light blue eyes. There was black stubble on his upper lip and his skin was a bit pale. He looked just as surprised to see George there as George was to see him.

"Who are you?" George asked slowly when he felt his racing heart calm down. He narrowed his eyes, "Where did you come from?"

The man put his hands up as he studied George with wide eyes, "I came from the forest. I'm a wandering trader of sorts!"

"Really...?" George rose an eyebrow, studying the man. He didn't feel uneasy about the stranger but... "I just came from that forest and I didn't see you or hear you around there..."

The man rose an eyebrow and smiled, "Well I *just* came from there. I came from West of the forest."

George hummed. That made more sense. He and the others were camped North of the forest. George gasped when the man started walking towards him, no ounce of hesitation. George's hands hovered over his sword and the man paused, "Sorry if I'm scaring you. I'm not gonna hurt you."

"Since you're a traveling trader you well know that you can't always trust the words of strangers," George muttered, narrowing his eyes at the stranger further. The man blinked before he laughed, nodding his head.

"Yeah, that's true!" He laughed out and walked closer, "How about this? My name is Sam but you can just call me Awesamdude!"

Sam's tone deepened at the end and he winked, leaving George bewildered, "Uh? Awesamdude?"

Why does everyone like weird names?"

Interest and curiosity flashed in Sam's eyes. George realized he might have revealed something and shuffled his feet awkwardly. Sam was staring at him, "What's your name? You're not gonna let me just awkwardly introduce myself right?"

"I'm...George," George mumbled, watching Sam's reaction. Sam smiled widely, "Just George..."

"Well just George," Sam laughed cheerfully, "Nice to meet you!"

"So do you actually want me to call you Awesamdude or Sam...?" George asked hesitantly. He still didn't sense any malice from Sam. If anything he was *almost* like Bad.

"Just call me Awesamdude! Get it? Awesamdude?" Awesamdude wiggled his eyebrows and George laughed but felt a bit uncomfortable for some reason, "So George...you seem to have nice aim with a bow! If you killed this cow all by yourself then you must live close by..."

George immediately felt his guard go back up and he frowned at Awesamdude, "Maybe...maybe not."

"Don't worry I'm not trying to rob you!" Awesamdude laughed as he put his hands up, "Are you staying somewhere by yourself?"

"Why do you want to know?" George questioned, studying him intensely. Awesamdude looked a bit sheepish suddenly.

"Well that probably sounded suspicious but I kind of need a place to stay for a couple of days," He replied and George thought he seemed genuine. He blinked when Awesamdude pointed to one of his legs and turned it slightly, showing a freely bleeding gash on the calf of his right leg. George gasped, eyes going wide.

"What the hell?!" George cursed, kneeling immediately to study it closer. It needed stitches and was still bleeding, but it wasn't bleeding profusely, "Why didn't you just tell me you needed help?"

When he looked up Awesamdude was staring at him with wide eyes and pink cheeks, "Uh, really-well that's uh, because I thought it'd be w-weird to ask a stranger to help me the moment I meet him."

"How is that weird if it's genuine?" George asked, tilting his head in confusion. Awesamdude just blinked before laughing and grinning at him.

"You're quite an interesting guy, hmm?" He smirked and George stared at him, "So you don't mind helping me out?"

"I don't mind but...how did this happen?" George asked, hesitating. His stuff was back at the house he was temporarily staying at with Dream and Bad. Speaking of his friends, would they mind that he wants to help a stranger? Would they be mad at him?

"I'm not proud of myself but I fell down a steep hill and cut my leg on a jagged rock," Awesamdude sighed but smiled afterwards, "If you're okay with it I can help you take that cow back to where you're staying."

George's heart skipped a beat. His mind was still racing with uncertainties but he didn't want to leave this guy to possibly get an infection or anything like that. It was almost *deja vu*. Hadn't he met Dream in a similar way and now they were best friends? Maybe Dream would understand.

George glanced at Awesamdude uncertainly, "I don't mind but let's wrap something around that so you don't just continue to bleed out while we get there."

Awesamdude laughed, "Okay! Thanks!"

"Oh and I'm traveling with two friends and they'll be there," George admitted, his heart racing at revealing this information. He wasn't being stupid right? Awesamdude looked at him in surprise but then mellowed into an understanding nod.

"They'll probably be suspicious of me then. You can take my weapon away if that makes things better," He replied and George felt himself relax a little.

"That might make things easier...one of my friends is naturally suspicious of others," George trailed off, thinking of Dream and remembering how Dream treated him at first. George shook his head, "Well first do you have a cloth on you or anything like that?"

"Just an old shirt I don't wear," Awesamdude answered, already turning a bit to rummage in his large backpack. He handed George a grayish pink shirt and George nodded before using the shirt to press on Awesamdude's wound and tying the sleeves as tight as he could without cutting off circulation.

George leaned back and smiled, "Okay, that should help stop the bleeding. You can help me carry the cow back but I'll do most of the lifting, alright?"

Awesamdude was just staring at him then and he got another wave of deja vu only this time he wasn't warm all over. Sam staring at him didn't make him feel anxious like it had when Dream stared at him when they first met. Was that because Dream was more dangerous and George instinctively knew that?

"Here's my weapon," Awesamdude said suddenly, handing a worn iron sword out to George. He took it and pushed it in the strap where his own sword was sheathed. George turned to Awesamdude and nodded, "Thanks again George. I'm glad to have someone help me."

"No problem," George smiled, recognizing that familiar happiness he felt whenever he was able to be of use to someone. They both stood at opposite ends of the dead cow and readied themselves to find the best way to drag it.

"George is taking awhile isn't he?" Dream muttered as he paused in hammering out the kinks in the iron chest plate he was working on. Bad snickered at him and Dream frowned, "I'm serious! Hasn't it been a little over an hour?"

"It has but I'm sure he's fine," Bad grinned, unable to help himself, "George has gotten really good at self defense due to practicing."

"Yeah but...he's so small," Dream scowled as he leaned back. He wiped his hands and face with a cloth before sighing, "What if he came across trouble?"

"Look, how about we give him another thirty minutes and if he's not back we'll go looking for him?" Bad offered with a knowing look in his eyes, "George can handle himself just fine you know."

"Not if it were a group," Dream muttered, his eyes darkening as he thought about all the wrong things. Bad huffed but smiled.

"Don't worry, Dream. I'm sure he's fine," Bad soothed and Dream sighed slowly this time, closing his eyes, "Are you going to talk to him when he gets back?"

"About what?" Dream questioned, peeking at Bad. He didn't look amused.

"You should talk to him when he gets back, Dream," Bad scowled, "At the very least reassure him that nothing is wrong with you and that you two are okay. You can't be that dense to not know he's worried about you right?"

"I know, I know...." Dream trailed off, staring into the woods, "I-I'll reassure him when he gets back."

Bad brightened and clapped his hands together, "Awesome! In the meantime there's something else I wanted to talk to you about!"

"Like what?" Dream asked warily, studying Bad's face. Bad rolled his eyes.

"It's about our little mission to the nether," Bad explained and Dream blinked before turning to give Bad his full attention, "Now that we've almost completed our armor we need to talk about how we're going to build the nether portal."

"We need obsidian still and we can only get that by mining with a diamond pickaxe," Dream grumbled. Everything in their plan seemed to be working in their favor except that one little part.

"Well actually I've been doing some reading," Bad started as his eyes flicked towards his pack by the front door, "We could combine water with lava and make obsidian that way. So we can find a decent lava pool and use buckets of both water and lava to make a nether portal."

"But how can we do that if we can't get close to lava without melting our skin off?" Dream deadpanned and Bad giggled.

"We'd need to drink fire resistance potions," Bad answered with a grin, "The effects of that would protect us from fire and lava."

"Oh..." Dream trailed off, his eyes widening as he thought about what Bad said. Dream knew a little bit about certain potions but not how to make them, "How would we get our hands on fire resistance potions?"

"That's another hard part. We'd have to find a village with a cleric that can make them for us," Bad sighed, looking a little dejected then, "I just thought that'd be another option for us."

"Even if we were lucky enough to find a cleric that can make them, it'd probably be expensive," Dream also sighed, crossing his arms, "Sounds like mining for obsidian is still a better option."

"Yeah...it was just a thought," Bad nodded, looking a little sad. Dream smiled.

"It's a great idea Bad, don't get me wrong," Dream soothed, "It just might be a little impossible for us."

Bad smiled at Dream trying to make him feel better, "I know...I just wanted to tell you about it."

They both heard rustling and turned to eye the woods. Dream's hand was already going towards the sword at his hip like an automatic thing while Bad tensed, staring intently. They both relaxed slightly when George came into view. A second later Dream gasped when caught sight of another man across from George, both of them seemed to be dragging a carcass.

"George!" Dream shouted, jumping off the platform and rushing towards the male. George jumped, his eyes widening as he looked up at Dream.

"Wait!" George shouted back, dropping the front of the carcass he was carrying and waving his hands anxiously. Dream didn't stop but slowed his run in confusion as he glared at the man with George, "He's not a threat. He gave me his weapon. He's injured..."

"Oh no, really?" Bad gasped and Dream jumped, not realizing that Bad had been running right on his heels. Dream eyed the stranger and the stranger shifted, a little nervous.

"Whoa...you weren't kidding when you said I might be intimidated," The stranger joked, lightly laughing as he glanced at George. Dream rose an eyebrow, looking between the two with his chest tightening.

"Who are you?" Dream growled, his hand twitching towards his sword, "Where did you come from?"

The stranger looked at him warily and George jumped towards Dream, trying to placate him. George began telling the story of what happened and the guy, Awesamdude, started butting in with his own side of things. It was only when the male showed his injury did Dream relax a little. So the guy wasn't lying to George...at least not about being injured.

"I...I was hoping it was okay to help...I mean I...I didn't want to just leave him like that," George stammered and Dream blinked when he realized George was staring at him hesitantly, like he was afraid Dream was *mad* at him. Dream was just wary of the stranger that's all. There was something about him he didn't like.

Dream smiled softly and was putting a hand on George's shoulder without thinking at first, "I'm not mad at you, George. If you think he's not a threat then I trust you."

The slow beam that George gave him almost knocked him off his feet and he was never more glad to be wearing a mask. Bad was biting his lip like he was physically biting back laughter and George turned to Awesamdude, "Let's get this cow closer to the platform so I can prepare it later. Then I'll treat your wound."

"Alright George, thanks!" Awesamdude grinned, staring at him. Dream felt another pang in his chest but remained silent. He and Bad decided to help them drag the carcass closer to the platform and Dream watched silently as Awesamdude followed George inside the house.

Bad lightly bumped arms with Dream and Dream looked at him. Bad smiled, "Let's go in after them. Can't be too careful right?"

Dream smiled, "Right..."

They both entered the house and Awesamdude was sitting alone on the couch, looking around with interest. When they walked in he looked at them before glancing away with a hesitant smile, "Sorry for making you guys uncomfortable...I was surprised to see George out there, you know?"

"I'm sure," Bad grinned as he walked closer to the guy, "I'm Bad and that's Dream by the way."

"Interesting," Awesamdude laughed out, "Now I see what he meant when he said what he said."

"What did he say?" Dream asked a little too intently, stepping closer to them. Awesamdude glanced at him before smiling a little awkwardly.

"When I told him my name he wondered why everyone he meets likes to have weird names," He laughed again and Dream smirked to himself, imagining George's reaction in his mind.

They were distracted when George came into the room with his pack in his arms. He sat beside Awesamdude on the couch and Dream carefully ignored how that made his chest burn. Things were quiet for a little bit as George slowly unwound a shirt from around the man's leg and reached in his bag for his wool cloth.

"So...you guys live here?" Awesamdude cleared his throat and glanced around at all three of them. Bad peeked at Dream, who went tense and George decided to answer.

"Not really. We found this place and it's convenient for us right now," George replied without looking up from working on cleaning the man's wound, "I have to stitch this up now. It won't feel pretty so fair warning."

"I've had stitches before," Awesamdude smirked down at George and Dream shuffled from one foot to the other, "Where are you guys headed?"

"Why do you want to know?" Dream scowled, aware of how rude his tone sounded. Bad was staring at Dream then and George looked up at Dream in surprise. Awesamdude glanced at Dream blankly.

"I'm just making conversation. I think if I wanted to hurt you guys I would have started with George," He said his eyes narrowing at Dream. Dream found his lip curling into a snarl and he bit back a retort.

"Uh, stay still. Don't move," George warned the male as he steadied the wounded leg. George shot Dream a somewhat confused look before he started working. Awesamdude returned to staring at George.

"To answer your question from before, we aren't heading anywhere specific," Bad lied and George glanced at Bad once before returning to stitching Awesamdude's leg. Dream also peeked at Bad, but was thankful that Bad lied.

"I see," Awesamdude smiled slightly as he turned his head to face Bad, "I'm heading South myself but do you guys mind if I bunk here for a couple of days?"

Dream felt himself bristle at the thought of this guy staying with them even if it were for two days and Bad hesitated as he glanced at Dream again. George stiffened for a split second before he said, "We don't really have another good bed here but I have a bed roll you can borrow."

Dream looked at George incredulously. Bad looked a bit awkward as he glanced between them all but he forced a smile on his face as he looked at Awesamdude, "Yeah you can take one of the other houses. I think that'll be best since we don't know each other well."

"Sure," Awesamdude agreed, glancing at Dream before he looked at George warmly, "And thanks George. You're so nice."

Dream bit his tongue hard and glared at Awesamdude. George smiled a bit at the guy which made Dream feel worse and George spoke up, "I'm not nice...it's just common courtesy. If I were in trouble, I'd want someone to help me too."

"Right," Awesamdude laughed, "Don't worry. I'd help you out."

Bad rose an eyebrow at the guy and then glanced at Dream, who was practically glaring a whole in

the new guy's head. It was obvious to everyone but George that the new guy was flirting with him a bit. Things were silent for a bit as Bad and Awesamdude watched George stitch the wound and Dream stood glaring either at the ground or at Awesamdude.

Then George leaned back and smiled, "All done. Just be careful on your leg so you don't pull the stitches."

"Thanks George!" Awesamdude grinned, studying his bandaged leg, "You seem good at that! Do you usually go around helping strangers?"

George startled and his eyes immediately went to Dream. Dream stiffened in surprise at George's sudden attention. George suddenly smiled and it was almost shy. It made Dream warm, "Only if they need my help I guess...."

Awesamdude and Bad laughed at that while Dream watched George look back at him. George blinked to see Dream already looking at him and he smiled hesitantly. Dream grinned and felt a inward pang when George's smile brightened like he was happy Dream wasn't avoiding him. Dream's earlier conversation with Bad entered his mind and he almost winced. So George was worried about Dream...

"So which house can I take?" Awesamdude spoke up, smiling at Bad and George.

"How about the one across the way?" Bad hesitantly offered, "We've already scouted this place out weeks ago so it's safe."

"Alright, sounds great!" He replied brightly and he turned to George, "So you guys all stay in this one house?"

"Yup," George answered with a small nod, "Why?"

"Just curious," Awesamdude shrugged, looking at George, "I noticed only one bedroom. So you guys camp out in there?"

"Why do you want to know?" Dream asked tensely and Dream knew Awesamdude didn't really like him so far because when Awesamdude turned to face him, his expression was a little colder.

"I was just asking because George mentioned giving me his bed roll and I don't want to take something he needs," He replied flatly and Dream noticed George tense.

"Uh, it's okay. There's a bed in there and Bad sleeps on the couch..." George trailed off, biting his lip like he didn't mean to say so much. Something shifted in Awesamdude's expression as he looked between George and Dream. It made Dream want to smirk. That's right...

"I see. Well I'm glad I'm not taking anything from you then," Awesamdude said carefully, smiling at George, "It would have been awesome to have you as a roommate though!"

George looked a tad confused like he didn't know what to say to that. Dream's hands curled into fists, "Really? Well...thanks..."

"Why don't I get you settled in where you'll stay?!" Bad jumped in loudly as he crowded close, surprising all three other males, "C'mon Awesamdude, wasn't it?"

"Oh...sure," Awesamdude quickly smiled and George hurriedly handed him the bed roll that he unattached from his pack. Dream realized that Bad was doing this to give George some space and allow Dream to talk to him. Bad winked at Dream and basically horded a confused Awesamdude

out of the house.

Once the sound of their voices trailed off, Dream turned to George. He was silently packing away the medical supplies. Dream awkwardly rubbed his hand on his neck and stepped closer to George until he was right by his side, "Uh, hey George...so that guy didn't do anything to you right?"

George looked up at him, "No he didn't. I think we can trust that he won't try anything."

'Unless it's with you,' Dream's traitorous jealous thoughts emerged and he pursed his lips, "Good...and you're okay, right?"

"Yeah, I'm okay," George answered, nodding. Something flashed in his eyes and he stood slowly, facing Dream, "Are *you* okay?"

"Uh, me? Yeah I'm okay," Dream stammered but forced himself not to avert his gaze from George's chocolate brown eyes. George studied his expression like he didn't believe him, "I'm sorry I worried you."

George's eyes widened and Dream wanted to face palm. Why did he say that so suddenly? "Then...are you good now?"

"Huh?" Dream blurted, looking down at him in confusion. George frowned worriedly.

"I thought that maybe I did something wrong...cause sometimes you avoid me," George stated looking slightly saddened, "Ever since I said we could share the bed together..."

"Oh...oh no, George you didn't do anything wrong," Dream frowned, "I didn't mean to make you think that. I just had a lot on my mind. I promise I'm not uncomfortable sharing a bed with you."

"You're sure?" George asked, looking at him doubtfully. Dream nodded and George continued, "So...we're okay, right? You're not tired of me?"

Dream's eyes widened. Where in the hell did he get that idea from? Dream stepped closer to George and put his hand on George's cheek, "Of course I'm not tired of you. We're best friends George!"

George's eyes widened at him but shockingly he leaned his cheek in Dream's hand, making him blush slightly, and smiled happily, "I'm glad! I was so worried that I did something wrong and I didn't understand what that was."

"You did nothing wrong George. Sorry for making you think that," Dream said softly and hesitantly pulled his hand away. George beamed at him.

"It's alright! If you...if you ever want to talk then you know you can talk to *me*, right?" George offered, looking at Dream almost shyly before he smirked, "Like I'm actually good at keeping secrets."

Dream laughed a little, "Thanks George, I'm sure you are! You can talk to me about anything too okay?"

"Right," George nodded, looking pleased with himself. Dream smiled in amusement. Where did that come from all of a sudden? George looked at the door and back to Dream, "Want to help me prepare the meat?"

"Sure I could use a break from hammering," Dream snickered and George laughed, bumping his

arm with Dream's before walking to the door. Dream walked after him and they both slipped out of the door. Dream grabbed and handed George some of their knives so that they could begin to prepare meat from the cow.

"By the way...you're sure you're not mad at me for bringing Awesamdude here right?" George suddenly asked, looking at Dream intently. Dream carefully avoided George's stare as he started cutting.

"I'm not mad at you, George. I'm just wary of that guy," Dream answered after a moment and George hummed. Dream didn't want to talk about the other man so he carefully changed the subject, "Oh, Bad had an idea about the nether portal that he told me about..."

"Oh really?" George blinked over at Dream in surprise, "What's that?"

Dream explained everything Bad told him earlier and George listened with a deep look in his eyes, "You're probably right Dream. It'd be faster for us to mine obsidian than trying to find a village with a cleric that would sell to us."

"Yeah," Dream nodded, "We still have those diamonds from the cave. I think I can make a pickaxe. I haven't told Bad yet but I'm thinking it might be easier to go in the cave we went to before."

"Because of the lava pool that was there?" George asked carefully, glancing at Dream, "We'd have to be very careful not to get too close to the lava and get burned or worse."

"True," Dream hummed and then smiled at George, "We'll bring lots of extra water just in case."

George smiled back, "That'll help. I know of a plant that you can crush into a cream that'll help burns too. I can try to find some around here if there's any."

Dream looked at George in surprise, "You know something like that? You're amazing!"

The blush that blossomed on George's face made him look so beautiful that Dream wasn't aware he was staring open-mouthed until George playfully pushed his hand against Dream's masked face, pushing him away a little, "Oh w-whatever Dream! It's not...I'm just..."

"And you say you don't know much," Dream teased, smirking, "Seems like you know more than me, Georgie."

"I...well I only know some things that you don't," George replied, looking embarrassed but he boldly looked into Dream's eyes, "And I don't know more than you Dream. You're...it's like you're good at *everything* you try to do Dream. It's kind of annoying really."

Dream laughed, almost wheezing and for some reason George's face brightened as he smiled warmly. Dream continued laughing and pressed his side into George's, "Aww, thanks George~!"

George rolled his eyes but he still had a blush and an affectionate grin on his face. Dream felt better than he had the past few weeks.

After an hour passed George and Dream finished gathering enough meat to last them for weeks. George was cooking the meat while Bad worked on a campfire. Awesamdude was helping Bad and seemed to be fitting in with their friend quite well. Dream disposed of the carcass and began to plaster himself to George's side since.

George felt immensely relieved that Dream wasn't uncomfortable or upset with him in any way. He

also reassured George that he wasn't getting tired of him. That was George's biggest fear. George was so happy to have a normal conversation with Dream again while they were preparing meat and for some reason, Dream was going out of his way to spend time with George.

"We should dry and salt some of the meat so we can pack it away," Dream told him while doing just what he said. George giggled.

"I was going to anyway, but thanks for helping me," George grinned, snickering at him. Dream rolled his eyes and once he packed away the rest of meat he walked towards the couch, "What are you doing?"

"I'm gonna work on something else while you finish dinner," Dream smirked, pulling out the bones from his pack and knife. It was starting to take shape but before George could study it, Dream shifted, frowning at him, "Don't watch me, dude. It's a surprise."

"And I can't know?" George pouted, crossing his arms across his chest.

"It's a surprise for *you*," Dream amended as he stared at George, who blinked before turning red.

"O-Oh...for me? Well, thanks, uh, Dream," George stammered and promptly wished he could slam his face on the counter. Why was he so awkward? Dream only snickered at him before turning around and working again.

A sudden thought came to George. What the *hell* kind of surprise is Dream making from bones? *Human* skeleton bones? George turned to stare at Dream's back in confusion. He nearly jumped two feet in the air when Bad and Awesamdude suddenly burst through the door. Bad laughed at George, "We finished with the campfire! Is dinner almost ready?"

"I'm cooking our meat right now," George muttered, glancing between the two, "Should be done in a few minutes."

"Nice!" Awesamdude grinned cheerfully and George smiled, "I'm really glad I met you guys. You seem really cool!"

"Thanks," Bad and George said simultaneously before laughing. George glanced over at Dream, but his back was still to them as he worked on the surprise. Bad skipped over to Dream then.

"Whatcha making, Dream?" Bad tilted his head curiously and George felt a strange ache in his chest when Dream carefully showed him without exposing it to George, "And you're making it from bone because...?"

"Why not?" Dream asked in confusion like that wasn't weird at all and it made George chuckle hysterically. Dream was *so* weird. Dream's eyes wandered to George and he smiled. It made George choke on his last chuckle.

"So George..." Awesamdude trailed off and George turned his attention to him, not noticing how Dream tensed and stared at Awesamdude with apprehension, "How long have you guys been traveling together?"

"Little over a month," George answered with a small smile, wondering why he singled him out to ask that question.

"Nice, I see," Awesamdude grinned as he leaned against the wall, "How did you meet these guys?"

"Umm..." George glanced at Bad and Dream, startled to see them staring at Awesamdude with

some expression he couldn't decipher, though Dream looked a lot less friendly than Bad did, "Well Dream and I started traveling after I helped him out. We found Bad and now we're just all traveling together."

He realized how awkward that was and blushed a little. Awesamdude chuckled jokingly, "So I'm not the first stranger you've helped then."

"Of course not," George laughed, rolling his eyes.

They exchanged a little more small talk but George still felt awkward for some reason. Well, one reason was that he was trying hard not to reveal too much. Dream had put away his 'surprise' and was actively participating in the conversation now but George could tell that Dream did not like Awesamdude and vice versa. It seemed like their first impression didn't go well for whatever reason.

And Awesamdude proved to be even more random than Dream when he grabbed George's face suddenly in the middle of a conversation about Awesamdude's blue eyes, "Dude, are one of *your* eyes blue or am I seeing things?"

"Huh?" George spluttered, surprised and confused that he was suddenly touching his face, "M-My eyes are brown..."

And then there was a sharp *thwack* and cracking noise. George jumped and so did Awesamdude, who turned in shock. George gasped to see a knife sticking in the wall behind where Awesamdude's head had been previously. All eyes turned to Dream, who looked sheepish, "Oops, guess it slipped out of my hands!"

Bad was shaking but his face was hidden by his hands. George didn't think he was scared, in fact, it was almost as if Bad was *desperately* trying to smother laughter. Awesamdude looked at Dream with huge eyes before he grinned a forceful grin, "Wow, what force for such an *accident*."

Tension quickly filled the air and George backed away in confusion, "Uh, the meat is...uh yeah it's ready!"

George was pulling out the meat when Awesamdude spoke up again, "Sorry for making you uncomfortable, George. My mom always used to tell me I had no sense of boundaries. I was just curious."

"It's alright...you just surprised me," George soothed but felt hesitant. It wasn't the same as when Dream grabbed his face. Was that normal or was that just because he knew Dream better?

"Sorry," Awesamdude laughed, "I swore I saw some blue in one of your eyes. Not the full color but like flicks of blue in one of them. I thought it was cool."

"I haven't noticed any color other than brown," George shrugged, trying to relax around the thick tension in the air. Dream startled him when he walked up to George and grabbed his wrist.

"Let me help you carry those George," Dream said softly, standing in such a way that he was in front of Awesamdude, "Then we can go eat outside around the campfire Bad built."

George quirked an eyebrow. Did Dream just ignore the fact that Awesamdude helped Bad with the campfire? George sighed and nodded his head, figuring not to cause anymore scenes with Dream and Awesamdude by just agreeing with Dream. Dream began to pull him past the other male and out of the house.

To his part, Awesamdude merely looked amused, like everything that happened was just good entertainment, so George was lucky that Awesamdude wasn't easily angered.

Chapter End Notes

I'm a sucker for jealous Dream or George! 😊😊

Anyways, I don't know what Awesamdude actually looks like and he might be a little out of character here to suit my story needs, haha! Hope you enjoyed, let me know what you think!

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

The group learns more about Awesamdude as they finish up their work. George comforts Dream.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I hope you've had a good time during your holidays! I'm finally back home and can get back into the swing of things! 😊

Also there's a lot of summarized time skip in this because I felt that my story was slowing down more than I intended at these parts so I wanted to speed it up a little. Let me know if you're confused about anything!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George managed to distract Dream long enough by the campfire that the thick tension that surrounded him before dissipated. This only lasted until Bad and Awesamdude joined them around the campfire. Awesamdude sat close to George like he wasn't going to let Dream's hostility bother him and George definitely thought Sam was braver than him. Dream could be so intimidating with that mask.

Dream glared at Awesamdude when he sat on George's other side but decided not to say anything mainly because he was afraid of what was going to come out of his mouth if he did. That and Dream knew he was being sort of unreasonable. George seemed more uncomfortable with how he was acting towards Awesamdude than the guy's advances.

"So good!" Awesamdude brightened as they all ate silently around the campfire. George jumped at the sudden exclamation before smiling.

"Thanks," George said as he continued to eat, quickly looking away. He peeked at Dream's face but couldn't see his expression with the mask in the way. He fought the urge to sigh. Dream's discomfort with Awesamdude seemed a little different and George didn't really understand why.

They finished eating in peace and as Dream helped George throw away the scraps, Bad turned to Awesamdude, "You know...I'm curious. You're a wandering trader right...? What do you trade exactly?"

Dream and George froze, looking towards Awesamdude, who appeared caught off guard. He then smiled slightly, "It varies. I don't know about other wandering traders you may have come across but I usually carry items related to red stone!"

Bad's eyes widened comically, "Red stone? That's pretty hard to get since, like diamonds, it's found deep underground!"

"Yeah, well, it's not that hard," Awesamdude laughed easily, "I guess it would be if you weren't used to mining for it. It's easier to find once you're deep enough unlike diamonds."

"Really?" George asked skeptically and Awesamdude's smile widened as he nodded, "Do you get good business selling red stone items?"

Awesamdude laughed again, "Well, I don't get rich off of it but I make enough to live comfortably. That's only when I sell my trade in big villages! I'm sort of an expert on red stone contraptions. I've made my own designs too!"

"Red stone contraptions?" Dream questioned, his eyes narrowing in confusion, "I don't really know much about red stone...what do you mean when you say contraptions?"

"Hmm, how do I explain...?" Awesamdude trailed off, staring at the ground in concentration, "I mean that I know how to make machinery that can work with red stone...uh maybe that doesn't make sense. Well for example, I recently invented a way to make a secret entrance using red stone, levers, and other contraptions. It's complicated to explain to others."

"A secret entrance?!" Bad and George exclaimed simultaneously while Dream's mouth parted in surprise.

"I didn't know things like that were possible," George gasped and Awesamdude's chest puffed out proudly, "That's amazing!"

Bad snickered when Dream stiffened and looked at George's face. Awesamdude and George didn't notice Dream's reaction. Awesamdude grinned as he looked at George as well, "Thanks! It's tricky and it always takes me years to perfect my inventions but I like working with red stone so..."

"So you're also an inventor then?" Bad asked and Awesamdude chuckled as he nodded, "That's pretty impressive. So you travel from big villages to offer your services and inventions then?"

"Something like that," Awesamdude shrugged, looking nonchalant, "I live in a pretty prosperous village, it's basically a city. I get requests from other villages to sell my items or to help them install red stone contraptions I've made. That's my main source of emerald making! Trading is just something I do as I travel which is a lot."

"Awesome," George murmured as he continued to look impressed. However, Dream's eyebrow twitched as Awesamdude's words actually registered in his brain.

"Wait," Dream spoke up and all three males turned to look at him in surprise, "You said you live in a prosperous village that's basically a city...there's only one village I've heard of recently that's like that....do you live in Technoblade's village?"

Awesamdude's eyes grew round and Bad gasped like that just registered to him as well. George's eyes widened as he looked from Dream to Awesamdude, who eyed Dream with an unreadable expression, "You....know Technoblade?"

"We met him a few weeks ago," Bad butted in as he suddenly looked excited, "So that means you do? You live in Technoblade's land?!"

"I...y-yes I do," Awesamdude suddenly seemed a bit wary but he smiled all the same, "So you guys know Technoblade...how did you meet him?"

Bad and George immediately looked at Dream. Dream went quiet but his eyes were trained on Awesamdude and he decided to tell the truth...mostly, "Bad already had contact with him and we

met up with him for some information..."

Awesamdude rose an eyebrow, "I thought you guys were just traveling with no clear goal? Technoblade only gives information to certain people and usually only if their situation is important enough for it."

The thick tension from before filled the air again and George froze, glancing at Dream nervously. Bad, however, seemed to make some sort of internal decision as he stared at Awesamdude before turning to Dream, "I think we can tell him a little bit more of the truth, Dream."

Dream whirled his masked face to stare at Bad in shock, "What?!"

"He's Technoblade's ally and he's given us no reason not to trust him. I'm not saying we should tell him everything but it wouldn't hurt to tell him why we're traveling," Bad narrowed his eyes as he explained this to Dream and George shifted anxiously. Awesamdude just looked confused but remained silent.

Dream remained tense but he sighed, "Fine....okay fine..."

Bad turned to Awesamdude with a serious expression, "We're looking for a pillager group that wears crescent-shaped tattoos on their necks."

Awesamdude's expression morphed from surprise to deep thoughtful confusion, "A pillager group? Why are you looking for a pillager group...? I can't say I've heard of them..."

"They...they took people we care about," Bad added and he was unable to hide his sad expression as he thought of his lover again. Dream watched Awesamdude's face like a hawk. George just frowned to see Bad looking sad again, "From what we know they're pillaging villages and taking the young people captive."

"What?!" Awesamdude squawked, his expression suddenly livid. His reaction made even Dream jump. No one was expecting that reaction exactly, "That's awful! What the hell?"

"Technoblade was helping us with information about that group," Bad carefully explained, not giving too much away, "Right now we're preparing to go into the nether...."

Awesamdude's mouth dropped open and he stared at Bad like he suddenly sprouted a plant on his head, "The nether?!"

"We have almost everything we need to go," George spoke up, smiling slightly at Awesamdude's funny expression, "We just need obsidian for the portal itself."

They all went quiet and Dream realized Awesamdude was staring thoughtfully into the campfire flames like he was deciding on something. Bad caught Dream's eyes and smiled as if to say 'see he's not a bad guy is he?' and Dream rolled his eyes. He couldn't help but agree. Awesamdude may have been a little too curious for his liking and he hated how Awesamdude seemed to flirt with George but he couldn't deny that Awesamdude was a good guy so far.

"Sorry...I'd help you but I don't have obsidian for trade," Awesamdude finally spoke up and George laughed.

"We weren't expecting you to have any or to give us some," George grinned and Awesamdude smiled, "We have diamonds so we're just going to have to go mining."

"Yeah I did have an idea to use buckets of water and lava but it'd impossible to make a portal like

that without melting our skin off," Bad added jokingly and Awesamdude blinked at him.

"Oh yeah...that's true. Water and lava makes obsidian," Awesamdude said out loud as if he were just considering that. This made everyone laugh, including Dream, much to George's surprise, "You'd be able to do it if you had fire resistance potions!"

"That's what Dream and I talked about," Bad snickered at Dream who chuckled again, "None of us know how to make it and we don't know any clerics that could make it for us without charging us our weight in emeralds for it though."

Awesamdude burst out laughing, "Ah right...that would be hard to..." Awesamdude trailed off as he stopped laughing and suddenly looked shocked as if a sudden thought came to him.

"You alright?" George asked with an eyebrow raised. Awesamdude whirled around to face him and the sudden movement made George flinch.

"I know a guy! A cleric! Uh, we're sort of friends and he owes me some favors!" Awesamdude stammered as his eyes widened further. Bad and Dream froze as his words registered, "His village is probably four hours from here but he'd be able to make some of those potions for you!"

"W-Wait really?!" George gasped, unable to believe their luck.

"Even so...would he even help us?" Dream questioned in disbelief. Awesamdude grinned brightly.

"Yeah! Like I said, he owes me a favor and I could write him a note so he'd know it's me asking for the favor for you guys!" Awesamdude explained as he grew more excited.

"Why...." Dream stopped talked abruptly, making all three guys looked at him in confusion. Dream clenched his fists and looked away from them. George noticed that Dream was shaking slightly and that worried him.

"Are you asking why I'd help you?" Awesamdude retorted with slight amusement, "The answers simple! George helped me out big time in the forest and I owe him one! This'll be me helping you in return. I give you some of my emeralds to give to my friend to make the favor more even for him as well."

"N-No, you don't have to do all that for us!" George stammered, clearly shocked. Awesamdude was already reaching into his pack and pulling out a big pouch. He opened it and Bad was floored by how much emeralds he was carrying with him.

"You're lucky you haven't been robbed!" Bad cried out and Awesamdude laughed, "What the muffin!"

"It's not like no body's tried," Awesamdude gestured to his injured leg. He poured a decent amount of emeralds into George's hand and forced George's hand closed around it with a laugh, "That technically isn't enough for potions but with that plus the favor he owes me, you should be able to get your potion and thus you should be able to make a nether portal!"

"Thank you so much!" George beamed and Awesamdude grinned, nodding his head. Bad glanced at Dream, who was still looking off to the side. It was impossible to see his expression, "You don't know how much this'll help us!"

"Well I'm glad. Like you said George, if it were me I'd want someone to help me out," Awesamdude smirked and George blinked before laughing brightly, "Let me write and sign that note to my friend so you can have proof. Also, do you guys have a map? I'll mark his village for

you."

"We do, thanks," Bad smiled, rummaging in his pack for Dream's map before handing it over once he found it.

Awesamdude signed a note and marked their map for them. They talked for a little while longer before deciding to rest for the night. Dream hadn't said a word the whole entire time but no one commented on it.

It wasn't until they were alone in the bedroom that George worked up the courage to ask Dream what was bothering him. He rolled over on the bed and looked at Dream's back. Dream always slept on the outside of the bed so that he could easily get out if he needed which left George by the wall. It didn't really bother him to sleep by the wall though.

"Uh...Dream?" George whispered as he clenched and unclenched his hand anxiously, debating whether or not to grab his friend's arm to get his attention. He flinched when Dream rolled over and looked at him silently. It was hard to tell with his mask still on but he seemed a bit blank, "What's wrong Dream? You got quiet earlier...and something seems to be bothering you...you can tell me. I-If you want that is."

He immediately felt stupid for trailing off so much and for stammering but Dream looked at his face, "Yeah...sorry. I guess I...just don't understand..."

"You don't understand what...?" George asked with concern. Dream shifted and laid his head on his own arm before he glanced back at George.

"I just don't understand why people keep helping when they don't know the person..." Dream muttered, looking away from George's face with a conflicting look in his eyes, "You, Bad, Technoblade, Awesamdude, even random villagers like that one guy Punz."

George felt his heart squeeze in his chest, "There are still good people in the world Dream...honest to God people that just like helping others."

Dream looked at him dead in the eye then, "Yeah...I guess there are. *You're* one of them."

George blushed but smiled, feeling a bit happy that Dream thought of him as a good person. He tries to be, "Thanks Dream. You're one of them too."

"I'm not," Dream denied immediately and George blinked, looking at Dream with a startled expression, "Not like you. I wouldn't help just anyone and....and I'm not that great of a person."

"That's not true," George muttered, frowning at Dream, "You are a good person, Dream. You've helped me and Bad plenty of times. I know you're the type of person that would help others...you are just more suspicious and wary of people but there's nothing wrong with that."

Dream hummed and George didn't know if he believed him or not. Dream frowned, "I guess I'm not used to people being so...helpful. Not without expecting things in return..."

George frowned sadly, "Dream...you've experienced people like that?"

"Over the years," Dream nodded, frowning as well, "It feels weird to suddenly be meeting so many people that'll just help for no reason."

"It's not for *no* reason," George smiled a bit, "Awesamdude wants to help because I helped him."

Dream scowled at the mention of Awesamdude and George rose an eyebrow, "Yeah I guess so..."

"Why do you act like that? I don't understand why you don't like him, especially since he's offered so much help," George said softly as he felt mild annoyance at not understanding something. It made him feel stupid and oblivious. Maybe he was...

"I...I don't hate him and I'm appreciative of his help..." Dream trailed off, unable to look George in the face, "I guess I don't like the way he acts around you...?"

"Oh...like when you threw that knife when he touched my face?" George retorted with amusement. Dream turned red and groaned, "That was a bit psycho by the way. He wasn't going to hurt me."

Dream muttered something he couldn't hear under his breath before sighing, "Yeah I know that now."

Things went quiet and George watched Dream stare at him thoughtfully, "What? Do I look weird right now or something?"

George's eyes widened and he almost bit his tongue on his last word when Dream suddenly leaned his masked face closer to his and stared him dead in the eyes, "D-Dream?"

"He was right...you do have a bit of blue in one of your eyes," Dream announced and George felt himself turning red while his stomach fluttered nervously, "It's only in one of your eyes though."

"O-Oh..."

"Sorry, am I making you uncomfortable?" Dream asked as he leaned back and George swallowed, shaking his head.

"No..." He lied and glanced up at Dream's face, wishing he could see what kind of faces Dream was making, "Can...can you take off your mask?"

Dream's eyes widened before he rose an eyebrow in confusion, "Why?"

"N-Never mind..." George stammered, resisting the urge to roll around and push his face into his pillow. Dream frowned.

"Well now I'm curious..." Dream said and then he smirked, "Do you want to look at my face? Is that it?"

"No!" George flushed, scowling at him as a rush of embarrassment flooded him. Dream laughed but, much to George's surprise, he reached back to unclasp his mask. George's mouth went dry. He didn't expect Dream to actually take it off.

"All you have to do is ask," Dream teased as he pulled the mask away from his face and placed it on the ground by the bed. He turned back and George took in all the features he remembered.

George's eyes roamed over his angular jawline and full lips before glancing at the galaxy of freckles that formed a trail from his cheeks over his nose. He blinked when he realized Dream's cheeks were turning pink and it was because he was still staring at Dream's face. George blushed himself and blurted, "I-I like your freckles!"

Dream blinked at him and that's when George noticed his thick eyelashes. Dream was unfairly beautiful and it made George feel pale in comparison, "Really? You like them?"

"Y-Yeah," George nodded and his eyes widened again when Dream smiled warmly, like he was really happy to hear that. George felt a full body shiver take over him and he rolled over quickly, "Well goodnight!"

He winced. He said that way too loudly but he was starting to feel weird from looking at Dream. George clenched his shaking hands and swallowed, closing his eyes to calm himself. Dream shifted behind him and chuckled a couple of times, "Goodnight Georgie. Sleep well."

George really hoped his weird behavior wasn't noticeable by Dream. Things just got normal between them and George didn't want to ruin that with his weird reactions. Maybe he should talk to Bad about it.

The next day felt as if it went by way too quickly to George. Things went along smoothly now that there wasn't much lingering tension between Dream and Awesamdude. In fact, it seemed like Dream was in high spirits for some reason and George wondered if that meant Dream accepted Awesamdude a little more.

Dream continued to work on George's armor set and Bad continued to help. George practiced archery close by and Awesamdude alternated between keeping him company and keeping Dream and Bad company. It felt nice. After a nice lunch Dream informed George and Bad that he wanted to use the diamonds they got to make himself a sword, since they wouldn't need a pickaxe now that they had a different plan for the nether portal. Bad was skeptical at first but George told Dream to go for it. He imagined how much more deadly Dream would be with a diamond sword.

The rest of that day went by just as peacefully. As Bad and Dream continued to work, Awesamdude helped George make more arrows and praised him for his crafting skills. Something about that made George's whole month. Someone skilled like Awesamdude praising him made it feel like it was the truth, that maybe he really was good at something. George was smiling the whole rest of that day.

At night, when it was just them two, Dream took off his mask again without George asking him to this time. George was a little more used to his reactions to Dream's face by then but that didn't make it any less difficult to deal with. Dream would tell him short little stories about him and Sapnap and George would find himself distracted by either Dream's expression or his lips. Still it was nice that Dream was comfortable showing him his face now.

It was like he was giving George a whole new level of trust and George was determined to keep it and not ruin it.

The second day went by just as quickly as the first. Awesamdude noticeably spent more time with George then from helping him hunt for food to gathering firewood and helping him make more arrows and bandages. Dream managed to finish George's armor set and that was the biggest highlight of the day.

All three of them tried on the iron armor sets that Dream made. Their measurements turned out to be perfect and it fit them pretty well. The iron itself wasn't perfectly smooth but that was alright, it would suit their needs. The only thing about it that George wasn't expecting was just how heavy it was on his small body. Dream just laughed and told him he'd get used to it.

After making sure the armor was up to their standards, Dream excitedly began working on his diamond sword. Bad was still nervous that they should make a diamond pickaxe anyway but he couldn't protest too much with how excited Dream was to make his own diamond sword. Awesamdude surprised them by helping a bit.

But then the sun showed signs of going down and Awesamdude decided he would leave the next morning.

"We'll probably be staying a couple more days. Are you sure you don't want to stay and heal more?" George asked worriedly as he gazed at his leg. Awesamdude grinned.

"Technoblade is expecting me back by the end of this week. He'll start sending search parties if I'm gone too long," Awesamdude laughed out and Dream snickered at the image in his head.

"Well we wouldn't want that," Bad laughed in amusement as well. George rolled his eyes. Awesamdude stopped laughing and smiled at the three.

"You know...when you're done looking for that group and all....you should come to Technoblade's village. I could vouch for you guys!" Awesamdude said excitedly as he clenched his hands into fists, "You're all talented so you'd fit right in living there!"

Dream and Bad went quiet in surprise while George blinked at being included in the 'talented' bit. He smiled shortly after, "I guess we'll see how it goes after we do what we need to do."

"Yeah!" Awesamdude cheered, smiling at George before he turned to Bad and Dream, "I don't know the whole story, but I hope you find your loved ones!"

Bad smiled warmly and Dream couldn't help but also smile as they both thanked him. They ate their cooked dinner in a lively manner before heading to bed that night.

And once again, Dream took off his mask as they prepared for bed and George really wanted to ask him why he was suddenly taking his mask off so much when he never wanted to before. Eventually his curiosity outweighed the part of him that was worried he'd make Dream self-conscious and want to put the mask on again, "Hey Dream?"

"Yeah?" Dream responded as he took off the fingerless gloves he was wearing.

"Why are you taking off your mask every night? I thought you didn't like taking it off..." George commented, biting his lip. Dream paused and turned to look at George. Something in George's expression made Dream smile.

"I don't mind taking it off in front of you..." Dream answered as he stared at George, waiting for his reaction. George blinked as he processed what he said.

"So you wouldn't if we were sleeping around a campfire with Bad like before?" George asked for clarification. Dream smirked.

"No probably not...I know Bad's seen my face that one time but I wouldn't really feel comfortable," Dream explained as he finished taking off his gloves and moved to climb into the bed. George moved to make sure there was plenty of room for him.

"Not that I'm complaining but why is taking it off in front of me any different?" George questioned as he brow furrowed. He was sure Dream caught him studying Dream's face like twenty times by now. Wasn't he uncomfortable about that?

Dream chuckled, "I don't know...you are different. I'm comfortable around you. I feel more relaxed? So it doesn't bother me. Does it bother you or something?"

'Not in the way you're probably thinking' George thought to himself before glancing at Dream's face, "No it doesn't bother me."

"Okay," Dream replied as his expression morphed into a hesitant one, "Can I ask you something?"

"Uh, sure," George nodded but he was inwardly panicking for some reason. Did he notice any weird behavior? George wasn't sure he'd know how to answer Dream about that when even he hasn't figured it out yet.

"Earlier when Awesamdude was talking about us living in Technoblade's village....you seemed happy about that," Dream stated uncertainly, watching George carefully, "I guess I was just wondering if you were wanting to leave with Awesamdude...or something..."

George's eyes widened at the unexpected question, "What?! No! Why'd you ask that?"

Dream looked so immensely relieved that it shocked George further. Was he really worried about something like that? "Well, you've been getting along with Awesamdude and you seemed excited when he mentioned it...I don't know. It's silly."

"I was kind of excited at the idea that we'd have a place to go after all this...you know?" George replied shyly and Dream's eyes lit up in understanding.

"Oh I see...yeah I guess that is reassuring," Dream laughed, feeling stupid all of a sudden, "I didn't think of it like that."

"Yeah..." George laughed with him.

"Maybe we could...after we find Sapnap and Skeppy," Dream grinned and George blinked at him, "I wouldn't mind seeing what Techno's village looks like."

George smiled brightly, "Yeah! I've never seen a village like they're describing before."

"They call it something like a city," Dream mused as he looked thoughtful, "I haven't seen a village that was that big either."

George and Dream continued talking late into the night. Dream was in the middle of telling a story about his little sister when he felt a sudden weight on his shoulder. He paused and glanced down. His heart became full at the sight that greeted him. George had finally given in to sleep and his head drooped, falling onto Dream's shoulder.

Dream's heart fluttered pleasantly in his chest and he carefully maneuvered the two to lie down from where they were sitting propped up against the bedframe. Once they were lying down, Dream shifted so he could look at George's face. George was really cute. His small porcelain like features never failed to draw Dream in. His pale skin looked so much better than his own tan skin.

George had such cute boyish features and Dream was a bit jealous of how effortlessly good-looking the shorter male was. He huffed before smiling to himself as he brought one of his fingers to rub George's cheek. To his surprise, George flinched ever so slightly and let out a soft groan before shuffling on the bed.

The soft groan and George's movement made Dream's eyes widened as his face heated up and he felt that heat travel down below. Dream sucked in a breath and immediately rolled over, willing himself not to get too excited and ruin everything. He couldn't help but replay George's soft groan over and over again in his mind. Dream sighed and scowled at himself.

Trying to reign in his feelings and desire was so far harder than anything he's ever had to do. Unfairly so!

The next morning George woke up extra early to make sure he could see Awesamdude off. Dream wasn't far behind him but he looked like he hardly gotten any rest, which George felt briefly guilty for. They talked until late last night after all. He was distracted from looking at Dream when they joined up with Bad, who was already helping Awesamdude double-check his belongings to make sure he wasn't leaving anything behind.

"George! Dream!" Awesamdude grinned as he shrugged on his large pack, "I wasn't gonna leave without saying goodbye!"

George grinned and walked towards him while Dream just blinked at the friendly grin that apparently included him. He knew he didn't exactly treat Awesamdude like a person should but apparently that wasn't enough to derail the cheerful guy's politeness. George gasped when Awesamdude hugged him once he was close enough.

"I'm really glad I met you guys. Thanks for letting me rest up here!" Awesamdude said with a smile as he parted from the hug. His smile widened when he saw the briefest twitch of Dream's eyebrow and he stepped a bit further away from George.

"No problem," Bad laughed out, "Thank you for all your help as well!"

"Yeah thank you," George added and Awesamdude beamed, doing a little salute.

"Common courtesy my dudes," He laughed before sobering up, "My offer for that vouch still stands. If you need somewhere to go then you should totally come to Techno's village!"

"We'll definitely think about it," Dream suddenly butted in, surprising them. Awesamdude smiled at Dream, happy to see that the masked man wasn't as hostile towards him as he was before.

"Awesome. Well I better get a good head start," Awesamdude said as he glanced at the woods behind him, "Good luck with finding your loved ones! Send a note to Techno's if you ever need my help again."

George noticed that same dazed look that Dream had the night before and smiled in understanding. Dream was still sort of floored that people could genuinely want to help others without requesting things in return. It also made George sad. How many people expected things from Dream over the years when he was just a kid looking for his best friend then?

He didn't allow himself to get too worked up as they bid Awesamdude farewell. George waved at his new friend until he was finally out of sight, hidden by the woods. Bad cleared his throat, "Well guys, guess we better get back to work. Dream still has to finish his sword."

"I think I should be done in a couple of days," Dream grinned as he eyed the blacksmith platform, "Then we can leave for that village Awesamdude mentioned."

"Yeah...it's kind of crazy that my plan is gonna work after all," Bad beamed, obviously pleased with himself, "Though I'm still a bit wary. We have suspiciously good luck. I keep getting reminded of what Skeppy always told me."

George smiled, "What? That people who have too much good luck will have a big misfortune happen to them?"

"Yeah..." Bad nodded, his face morphing into something serious when he saw Dream and George's smile, "Don't get me wrong, I'm happy that things are working out so well but.....Skeppy might be onto something..."

"Don't worry about anything you don't have to worry about Bad," George warned, not wanting his friend to get too worked up.

"We'll just handle a bad situation if it happens, okay?" Dream soothed and Bad sighed before smiling.

"Okay."

Chapter End Notes

It's really saying something that Bad, who is usually optimistic, is so worried about something happening....

Thank you for all support! Sorry this chapter was a little shorter than I usually like but I've been pretty busy!

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

The guys find the cleric they're looking for while George reveals just how protective he is of his friends and Dream proves that his odd confidence in himself is not just for show.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I got really excited for this chapter for some reason so I made time to finish it and get it out earlier than I usually do!

Thank you so much for all your support! This story has almost 350 kudos and like 65 bookmarks, that's insane! Thank you again!! I hope you enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

By the time Dream finished making his diamond sword, the weather worsened into frequent rain showers and terribly cold winds. If they weren't so eager and hell-bent on getting on with their little mission to the nether, George figured they probably would have stayed longer in the abandoned village before venturing on to the village Awesamdude marked out for them.

However, Dream and Bad *were* extremely eager and excited to which George could understand. They were getting closer to the answers they sought about their loved ones, after all, and for Dream- *he'd been waiting years*. So George understood that, despite the terrible weather, they wanted to press forward pretty much the morning Dream finished making his sword.

So they dawned on their newly made iron armor and the thick furry blankets George managed to make from cow hides and continued North out of the forest and away from the temporary shelter they'd been staying at for the past few weeks. George was sort of sad to see it go but even *he* had to admit he was intrigued to hurry and enter the nether. He'd heard all kinds of rumors and stories growing up so, despite the danger, George felt a sense of excitement at the idea of exploring something new.

And he wasn't alone in that regard. Their whole trip through the cold rain, Bad excitedly shared everything that he'd read about the nether. Dream and George both knew a lot of what he already read about *except* for numerous creatures that apparently existed in the nether if what Bad read was correct.

"So you're telling me that there are actual *pigmen* in the nether?" George asked incredulously as he gaped toward his right side, where Bad was currently walking. Since it was so cold and they were

all unavoidably wet, they were walking close together to help keep warm.

"According to one of my books, yeah," Bad grinned at George's expression and continued to relay a description his book had of said creatures.

"That's....gross," Dream blinked, unable to come up with a better word for his thoughts and Bad laughed. George grimaced in disgust.

"Zombie-like pigmen...walking around all decomposed? That'll be a scary sight," George sighed and Bad sobered up before nodding in agreement.

"True...which is why I wanted to tell you guys about the creatures I've read up on. Maybe we'll be more prepared when we enter the nether," Bad explained as Dream hummed, stretching his arms out in front of him. He barely avoided hitting George, whom he was walking beside, due to how close they were all walking.

"But from what you've said they don't attack you unless *you* attack them," Dream spoke up and Bad looked down as he walked thoughtfully.

"Yeah, the pigmen won't hurt you unless you hit them," Bad agreed before looking serious suddenly, "But I think I read somewhere that regular pigmen...the *piglins* I think they're called, will probably attack you."

"Great," George groaned, crossing his arms when he felt the hair on them raise up from goosebumps.

"I don't think I'm too worried about them," Dream wrinkled his nose just visibly enough behind his mask.

"I'm more worried about some creature called a magma cube," Bad pursed his lips, an anxious look to his green eyes, "They're like slime monsters but kind of made from lava? So they burn you if they touch you and they're annoying like slime because they split apart."

"You're making me regret coming along on this little mission," George paled and for some reason Dream laughed, placing a hand on George's head.

"Don't worry. We'll avoid what we can," Dream snickered when George shot him a dubious look, "And I'll protect you."

George felt his cheeks turn pink and he turned his head away. He didn't doubt Dream at all, "Okay..."

"Just don't leave me behind," Bad muttered under his breath jokingly but Dream heard him and rolled his eyes.

They got a little quiet after that as Bad felt a little guilty for freaking George out about the nether creatures. The wind picked up and, even through their iron armor and thick blankets, George felt the chill in his bones.

"Ugh, I hate this wind!" George complained as he curled his blanket tighter around his shoulders. Dream looked at him sympathetically and moved to curl one of his arms around his shoulders, tugging George into his side.

George blinked and looked at Dream's masked face. Dream simply smiled and adjusted his own blanket to help share his body warmth with George as they walked. George didn't say anything but his heart began racing from being pressed against Dream.

Bad glanced at the two before being torn between squealing at how cute they were to snickering at Dream's obvious show of affection that George failed to see as anything other than friendly. He pulled out Dream's map from his pack carefully, as he'd been the one to carry it for some time now, and studied it slowly.

"I think we still have at least another hour and a half to go," Bad announced as he continued to stare at the map. He drew the other two's attention, "Well that is to say if this map is accurate. I trust Awesamdude though."

"Hopefully the village is warm," George sighed but felt thankful to Dream when he felt the slight chill dissipating, "I'm surprised it's not snowing."

"It's no where *near* as cold as it usually gets George," Dream laughed, amused by the smaller male. He unconsciously tugged George even closer to his side.

George shot him a disgruntled look, "You're kidding."

"He's not actually," Bad snickered as he folded up Dream's map again. George eyes widened as he looked between both of them. Dream chuckled.

"Well that's just great then," George grumbled.

"Don't worry George! Whenever you get too cold we can just cuddle," Dream said teasingly and his grin widened when George's eyes went round and he turned red, looking at Dream in surprise.

"T-This is sort of helping," George replied quietly, looking down at the ground to avoid Dream's

eyes, "Thanks."

Bad held his tongue. They really were too cute but Bad didn't want to accidentally say anything to give away Dream's feelings for George. He did, however, really want to talk to George and figure out what George's feelings were towards Dream. Poor guy must be kind of confused considering his lack of physical and social contact.

"We can handle the cold guys," Bad shook his head from his thoughts and smiled at his friends, "C'mon we're almost there!"

The rain finally stopped just minutes before Dream spotted the village they were searching for. It was fairly open with only a few trees here and there so it was easy to make out. It was also fairly average considering the size of the last two villages they were in. Not that George was complaining.

"Yes!" Dream cheered and the loudness of it made George wince, leaning away from him, "C'mon let's go!"

Needing no more prompting, Bad and Dream took off like they were racing. George was quick to run after them but at his own pace. His clothes were still wet and it was still slightly chilly. He shivered and the weight of his iron armor was already making his body ache.

George followed his two friends as they all but ran until they reached the path in front of the village. George was glad they stopped when they did. He was sure the villagers of this village wouldn't want a couple of hooded strangers running into their village like that.

"The church is at that end," Bad said as he gestured to the right before waving at a villager who walked past and noticed them. The villager's eyes widened at them before he fast-walked away. George snickered as he caught up to his friends.

"Then let's go, lead the way!" Dream grinned over at Bad, shuffling his feet almost impatiently. He was so excited he wasn't noticing the growing tenseness in the air as more villagers became aware of their presence.

It wasn't until they started walking towards the path on the right that a harsh male voice yelled out, "Stop right there!!"

George whirled around along with his two friends and he paled at the sight of several village men with various weapons. He realized that most of them were looking at *Dream* though. Dream startled and immediately raised a hand towards his new diamond sword.

"We don't want any trouble stranger!" The same male voice called out, his tone and stance hostile as he tried to figure out if Dream was a threat or not. George felt a surge of nausea hit him and he

tensed at the term.

"Neither do we," Dream replied calmly as he stepped closer to place himself in front of George and Bad instead of being just beside them, "We're not here to hurt anyone we're just looking for the cleric here."

That seemed to make a lot of the villagers relax slightly. The hostile man that kept calling out to them paused and eyed him warily, "We do have a cleric...so you're here for his services then?"

"Yeah," Dream nodded, not taking his eyes off the group. At the affirmation many of them put away their weapons. The man that called out to them narrowed his eyes at Dream suspiciously but nodded just the same.

"Okay. Just...you try *anything* 'n you and your friends are goners," He warned and Bad jolted from suddenly being included in the threat. Dream was none too happy about that fact as he clenched his teeth and tried not to bare them at the guy in a snarl. He simply nodded, not trusting himself to speak, "The cleric is in the church then."

"Thanks," Bad replied politely, hoping to further disarm the man's wariness towards them. The man said nothing but he sauntered away with many of the other villagers that were still lingering. Bad sighed, "Well they must deal with attacks if they're this wary of us."

Dream didn't comment but *did* turn to face George, who had been quiet the entire time that went down. George had his arms curled around him like a weak hug and the sight of him made Dream's heart ache, "You okay, George?"

George jumped out of his apparent daze and looked at Dream, who still seemed tense. He nodded hesitantly, "Y-Yeah. Sorry...it's just...memories I guess."

Bad frowned at that and Dream walked over to George, smiling slightly. He grabbed George's hand and squeezed, "Let's just get what we need and leave, alright?"

George stared at their intertwined hands and couldn't help but feel a bit better. Dream was always good at making you feel safer. George smiled back, "Yeah."

"C'mon guys," Bad muttered as he turned, feeling a rare sense of annoyance towards the villagers, no matter how justified they might have been for their over dramatic reaction, "It's down this way."

George didn't let go of Dream's hand once.

They came to a stop in front of the church and George really took it in. It was made from gray cobblestone and stone brick. It must have been here for quite some time because some of the stone

brick was cracked in places. There was a yellow-tinted double window a level above the single door out front.

Bad exchanged a glance with them and he knocked on the door three times as George finally let go of Dream's hand to rummage in his pack for Awesamdude's signed note. He figured that he'd stave off any weariness if they announced who sent them here right off the bat. George didn't want to experience anymore villager hostility.

The door opened almost before Bad even leaned back from knocking and the suddenness surprised all three of them. The male on the other end blinked at them in shock. The man looked to be in his late forties. He was kind of short with signs of gray in his brown hair.

"Hello...who are you lot then?" The man asked roughly, narrowing his eyes in suspicion. His gaze seemed to zero in on Dream in particular and that made something clench in George. He was beginning to feel incredibly angry at these villagers.

"Awesamdude sent us," George spoke up, unable to help his flat tone. Bad and Dream looked at him with slightly wide eyes and the man blinked before settling his blue eyes on George, "Here's a note signed by him. He said you owed him a favor and that you could help us."

The man huffed, his eyes narrowing at George in almost disbelief, "Some way to start out asking for favors with that tone of yours."

George bristled immediately, "I *was* thinking of being polite. That was before you and your villager pals decided to treat my friend here like the dirt beneath your shoes!"

Bad sucked in a breath but felt immensely proud of George then. Dream stared at George with owl-like eyes at the wave of protectiveness he felt coming off the smaller male. After the stunned surprise came a type of giddy contentedness. George was protecting him...

The cleric stood there silently, his eyes wide as he looked from George to his two friends. He hesitated and sighed, rubbing the back of his neck, "Alright, look, I'm sorry. We're a closed off village and we don't get visitors often. Especially not ones that look like *him*. Didn't mean no harm."

George reigned himself in, trying to calm the shaking anger rattling his bones as he handed over the signed note, "Okay. I'm sorry too. Here, Awesamdude signed this so that you didn't have to feel so wary."

The cleric grabbed the note and read it then examined it a second time, "So he wants to call in his favor for you lot? And he's paying? So be it then. Please come in."

Bad stepped in after the cleric first but not before sending an award-winning beam to George, who

blinked at him. George looked at Dream and was even more surprised to see a giddy smile on his face that would have made him chuckle if he weren't still calming down.

"Thanks for that, George," Dream said with a toothy smile as he came and gave George a one-armed hug, squeezing him so hard that George grunted, "I'm used to it though so don't worry about me."

"Need...air..." George gasped out and Dream laughed, parting from him before partially stepping inside the church. George was quick to follow after him with a serious look, "Just because you might be used to it doesn't make it *alright* by the way."

The warm look Dream gave him then was enough to make his head swim and he felt the urge to get close to Dream, but he was brought out of his thoughts when the cleric started talking again, "Fire resistance potions, eh? I got just the stuff. You lot are pretty lucky."

Bad let out a loud laugh, unable to hold back. This startled the cleric and made Dream almost wheeze, "We've been having a lot of that lately."

The cleric sent him an odd look but began rummaging through a barrel for some supplies as his blaze stand began heating up, smoke rising off it. George shivered, already feeling the warmth start to sink into his skin as he and Dream walked closer to Bad.

"Can I ask you something?" Bad questioned, looking over at the cleric curiously as he began sorting out the ingredients he was grabbing.

"Yeah? What is it?" He asked with his rough voice as he stood and plopped the ingredients in a small pile before walking to the other side of the room and pulling out some glass bottles.

"Do you know if there are any lava pools around?" Bad asked slowly. George and Dream quickly looked at him. They didn't think to ask about it but it was a good thing Bad did. It was their next step after this.

The cleric stopped for a second and looked at Bad in slight confusion before he walked towards his blaze stand, deciding that it was none of his business, "There's one close to the village. About a fifteen minute walk from here actually."

George and his friends' eyes widened in shock as George stammered out, "R-Really?"

"Mhm," The cleric answered as he filled the glass bottles with water from a cauldron and hung them on the blaze stand, "We use it to get rid of unwanted things like trash. We also use it to heat our water or furnaces when we can."

"Amazing..." Dream muttered but George and Bad both knew he was talking about their luck. The cleric didn't respond to that as he was so focused on his work. Bad watched him work in fascination while Dream sat in one of the chairs off to the side and began rummaging in his pack. George watched the cleric work for awhile before sitting next to Dream.

He was surprised to see Dream was still rummaging in his pack before realizing that Dream was doing something else. He decided to bite the bullet and ask, "What're you doing, Dream?"

Dream glanced at him, "Working on your surprise."

"Oh..." George blinked, staring at him, "I've been meaning to ask...*why* are you giving me a surprise? N-Not that I'm not thankful..."

"I think it's something that might help you," Dream answered vaguely with a shrug and George rose an eyebrow. Something made of human skeleton bones will help him? How in the hell...?

George decided to not ask anymore as he let out a sigh and leaned his head back, still feeling uncomfortable in his wet clothes. There was nothing else to change into though so George would have to just make sure they all kept warm. That shouldn't be a problem considering where they were going after this...

A few minutes later, George opened his eyes when he heard the cleric clear his throat. He pulled the three bottles, now tinted a yellowish-pink if George was seeing correctly, off the blaze stand and handed them to Bad, since he was the closest. Bad beamed as he held them all carefully.

"One for each of you," The cleric explained as he crossed his arms and leaned back, studying them. George rummaged in his pack for the small pouch of emeralds Awesamdude gave him before handing it over to the cleric, "Thank you."

"How long is the effect for?" Dream asked as he closed his pack and stood up.

"About eight minutes I'd say," The cleric answered as he moved to put away his earnings.

"Okay. Thank you," Bad smiled at the cleric before handing one bottle to George and Dream. George marveled at how warm the bottle was and studied the way the liquid inside almost sparkled.

"No problem," The cleric said gruffly, eyeing them, "Use it wisely."

"We will," Dream grinned, obviously excited now that they had the actual potions in their hands.

They left quickly after that. It was clear there was still a little tension in the air and George was left wondering if that was due to *him* or just because the cleric didn't like being around a lot of people in general. That cleric seemed rough around the edges and he had no idea how Awesamdude charmed him.

"I have an idea," Bad spoke up, his tone incredibly cheerful. George looked over at him at the same time Dream did, "I don't know how long it'll take us to actually *make* the portal this way, but if we can we should save two of these potions for when we're in the nether."

Dream brightened, "I was literally just thinking the same right now."

"Great minds think alike," Bad grinned and they chuckled, "We might end up needing all of them just to make the portal though."

"Nah, I'm gonna get it done myself in under 8 minutes," Dream smirked confidently and George gaped at him in an obvious manner. Bad burst out laughing but George wasn't sure who Bad was laughing at more.

"I'm starting to see just how crazy you are Dream," George muttered and Dream wheezed, leaning into him purposefully.

"I'm serious though. I'm *determined* to make this work," Dream said as he stared at his fire resistance potion, "It'd be too good for us if we were able to keep two fire resistance potions with us in a place that's mostly fire and lava."

"I mean...yeah..." George trailed off, feeling uncertain, "But making a portal with lava and water in under 8 minutes?"

"I'll make it work," Dream promised, a bit smug and George rolled his eyes as Bad finally caught his breath, "First let's get plenty of water..."

The cleric had been right when he said there was a lava pool outside the village. In fact, it appeared that the villagers made a path from their village to the lava pool so he must have been telling the truth when he said they made use of it. It left George feeling a little hesitant. If they use this lava pool for their portal wouldn't that inconvenience the villagers?

Then again, it was a pretty large pool of lava so it wasn't like they'd be taking over the *entire* thing with their portal. George decided not to worry about that, he was more concerned with how Dream was going to pull off making a portal in under eight minutes.

They put down all the wooden buckets of water they were carrying with them. They'd filled six large wooden buckets with water from the village's well supply before coming down. George

hoped it was enough water otherwise they'd have to walk back to get more and Dream would *never* finish the portal in under eight minutes then.

Dream eyed the bubbling lava and Bad seemed hesitant, "Wow, I almost feel like catching fire right now and we're not even at the edge."

"It burned all the nearby trees," George added as he looked around at the burnt and blackened trees. It was incredibly creepy, "Are you sure you want to be the only one making the portal, Dream?"

"I'm sure," Dream cleared his throat, smiling over at George, "I'll let you guys know when you can help. I *really* think I can do this."

George couldn't help but melt at Dream's confidence, "Okay. Bad, you have the iron bucket?"

Bad nodded as he put his pack down to rummage through it. Dream also took off his pack and thick furry blanket to rid himself of the extra weight. Bad pulled out a thin iron bucket that they'd made back in the abandoned village before they left. He handed it over to Dream, "I'll be timing you, alright?"

"I trust you Bad," Dream nodded as he grinned at their black-clad friend, who frowned, obviously still worried, "Don't worry guys. Just stay back so you don't get burned and bring me some buckets when I say, okay?"

"Okay, it'll be like a team effort!" George smirked, forcing himself to be more positive. He was still worried about one of them catching fire from the proximity alone but he wanted to take a page from Dream and be more confident. Dream grinned at him.

"Exactly!" He said excitedly as he brought out the fire resistance potion and studied it with one hand, "Okay. Potion, iron bucket for the lava, and you guys have the water buckets. I think that's everything."

"I think so," Bad nodded, biting his lip, "You ready, Dream? Got an idea of what the portal is supposed to look like?"

"Yes," Dream laughed, poking Bad's arm to get him to lighten up, "We studied that diagram in your book for *hours*. I have an idea of how to do this."

"Let's just get this over with then," Bad sighed, his hands almost shaking. Dream nodded again, his eyes becoming serious behind the mask as he uncorked his potion and downed it before anyone could say anything. George's eyes widened.

Dream left the bottle with his stuff and hesitated for a minute or two to make sure the effects settled, turning to look at them warningly, "Hand me two of the buckets of water please."

George immediately rushed to do such and grunted from the weight as he handed it over to Dream, who handled it easier than he did. George pouted and Dream grinned at him before walking closer to the edge of the lava pool slowly.

Bad seemed to relax when Dream didn't immediately catch fire. They both watched Dream eye the lava pool, studying it before he grabbed one large bucket of water and poured some of it in the lava pool. George gasped at the loud hiss that filled the air along with the thick smoke that followed.

Dream waved a hand to get rid of some of the smoke from his face before he eased himself down. George and Bad tensed but Dream turned to them with a smile, "It worked! I'm actually standing on obsidian!"

"*Great*," George deflated in heavy relief before grinning teasingly at him, "Well hurry up, Dream! You're on the clock here!"

"I know, I know," Dream rolled his eyes as he turned towards the lava and began a slow process of scooping up a bucket full of it.

Bad and George couldn't believe the lack of hesitation Dream showed as he carefully began to pour lava onto the obsidian literally *right* by his side before quickly switching to grab for some water to pour on it. George watched in fascination to see the lava hardening into obsidian.

They continued to watch Dream work and helped him by carrying the other four large water buckets when he needed them. Eventually he had both sides up, it was almost as tall as Dream. Bad bit his lip, "You have two minutes left Dream!"

"You worry too much, I *got* this," Dream laughed over his shoulder at them, "I just need to finish the top of both sides and connect it. It should be good after that."

"Well hurry up please," George said anxiously, wringing his hands and clenching the end of his sleeves. All he could think about was Dream's potion effect wearing off and him catching fire or falling in the lava.

Dream snickered at them as he hurriedly began to finish. He'd be lying if he said he didn't feel a constant rush of adrenaline to get this portal done in a hurry. Dream's arms were nearly shaking with effort as he carefully poured buckets of lava individually on each side at the top before turning to grab the water so quick the movement was barely registerable. Dream poured the water at the top to connect it and then leaned back, his eyes widening when he realized he was finished.

"I did it!" Dream near-yelled in his own disbelief. George and Bad gasped as they took a couple of

steps closer. The shape of it wasn't a *perfect* square but it should do fine all the same. George was immensely surprised Dream managed it in under eight minutes.

"I can't believe this..." George trailed off, voicing his thoughts while Bad just stood there stupefied. Dream laughed, cheering.

"I *told* you I could do it! It may not be perfect but I still did it," Dream smirked, feeling incredibly proud of himself as he climbed out and stood on the edge, "I bet I could do it even faster with time and experience!"

"You're *crazy*," Bad muttered, coming out his shock, "But well done! You...you actually did it!"

"Yeah! All we need is to light it up," Dream replied as his eyes lit up in excitement, "George, can you grab my flint and steel out of my pack for me?"

George nodded and turned, squatting down to rummage through Dream's pack until he found the item in question. He quickly stood and walked over to hand it to Dream. Dream immediately ducked back down to squat directly above the entrance to the portal before he looked over his shoulders at them, "Let's see if it works!"

George mentally crossed his fingers as Dream got a little closer to get the sparks on the obsidian. Once he flicked the flint against the steel, the sparks hit the obsidian portal and immediately it lit up with a dark pinkish almost purple hue. George flinched back and Bad gasped. Dream seemed just as startled.

"Whoa..."

"Holy shit it worked!" George gasped out.

"Language George!" Bad admonished, looking stunned. Dream stood up and turned to them, but his expression was hard to tell with his smiley-faced mask in the way. His mouth, however, was trembling.

"Bad...Bad we're so *close* to finding them!" Dream stammered out as he approached their friend. Bad seemed just as mystified by the revelation and George smiled softly at them before grabbing his blanket and pack to throw over his shoulder again.

"W-We are..." Bad swallowed, his eyes tearing up as he looked back at Dream, "And....and we're ready for this right? We're ready for the nether?"

"I am if *you* guys are," George decided to speak up and they both looked at him with wide eyes. George merely smirked, despite his heart pounding in his chest from anxiety, "Let's get a move on."

We have people to find in the nether and who knows where we're gonna spawn in at!"

"True," Bad nodded as he chuckled while Dream grabbed his pack and blanket. They decided to stuff their blankets in their packs. They wouldn't be needing them out when they're in the nether.

After double checking everything, Dream turned to them and surprised them by grabbing each of their hands with a serious expression behind the mask, "We'll go in together. Let's do it quick so the heat from the lava doesn't bother you guys."

"Okay," George nodded, squeezing Dream's hand. Bad merely smiled as he nodded as well.

George had to take deep breaths and remind himself that he'd do whatever it takes to keep his two friends alive as they all three stepped onto the obsidian in the middle of the purple hue simultaneously.

The three males felt a surge of energy that seemed to pull and push their bodies at the same time while their vision blurred dizzily as if they were spinning non-stop. The air around them heated up and something tugged on George's hand. When he finally opened his eyes, the dizziness was dying down and he concentrated long enough to immediately look to his side to check on his friends.

They were still holding Dream's hands and Dream was bent over a little, sweat forming on his face from the heat in the air. Bad was panting with his eyes clenched shut as he tried to stave off the lingering dizziness and nausea. George relaxed when he saw them unhurt before he glanced up and froze.

Everything looked black. Like various shades of black. In the distance there was an encompassing glow that George knew *had* to be from lava. He shifted his feet and stared at the ground that felt almost spongy beneath his feet.

"You guys okay...?" Dream asked quietly and George felt him tug on his hand again. He looked over at Dream, who seemed to be calming down.

"I'm fine," George answered, squeezing Dream's hand.

"I'm good too. My head is just swimming a little," Bad groaned as he let go of Dream's hand to wipe his face. Dream chuckled but appeared relieved.

"Same. It's going away though," He replied and George watched his friends finally look around, "The ground feels weird here. Not quite muddy but like..."

"I thought it felt spongy," George grinned, voicing his previous thoughts. Dream eyes lit up.

"Yeah! Like that! And everything is red so that's kind of disorienting," Dream mused as he studied the surroundings.

George snorted, "Try seeing nothing but a whole bunch of black instead."

Dream and Bad both paused, glancing over at him. Bad shivered once, "That's really *ominous*."

"I thought black was your signature color though," Dream teased, wheezing when Bad shot him a look. George shook his head.

"Anyways, any idea of where we should start looking for a lost or trapped group of people?" George questioned as he adjusted his hoodie beneath his armor. Jeez, he was already sweating so much.

"Well according to what I've read, there are rumors that there are structures built in the nether. There's the blackstone ruin-like structures called bastions which we should *definitely* stay away from and the maroon-bricked structures called nether fortresses," Bad explained as his eyes glazed over in thought, "I doubt any group of people stuck in the nether would just be out in the *open* so I say we look for a nether fortress."

"I trust Bad's decision making skills here," Dream smirked and Bad rolled his eyes, "I'm *so* glad we have a traveling librarian with us."

George laughed at *that* particular memory while Bad just rose an eyebrow at Dream, "Are you making fun of me cause I read a lot Dream? If so that's not very nice."

Dream laughed loudly, "I'm not making fun of you!"


"Fine, whatever," Bad sighed, crossing his arms, "Let's just get going already."



George slowly stopped laughing as Dream nodded, getting his laughter under control. They eventually decided they were going to go left where it appeared the ground tunneled downwards a bit.

Neither George nor Dream noticed that they were still practically glued to each other's side.

Chapter End Notes

I'm so looking forward to these chapters in the nether. You have no idea! I hope you

all are excited for what might unfold as well! Also I am, like, all for that protective George moment. 

By the way, I wanted to introduce Dream's talent for building super quick nether portals here but in a realistic way. I loved it, haha, especially with how panicky Bad was and how George gaped at him!!  

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Things get tense as George and Dream argue. Then things go from bad to worse.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Again, thank you so much for the support you've been giving me and my story! I'm so happy!

Also FAIR WARNING: There is just a little gore, not much, in the chapter. Also, many new people are introduced but only the ones that matter have names. Just don't want anyone getting confused!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Of all the things George worried about, getting lost in various tunnels in the nether wasn't one of them. And yet here they were, still wandering in tunnels filled with mostly nether rack that seemingly had no end in sight. Bad still had some leftover spray paint from when they mined in that cave so it wasn't as if they were *completely* lost, but still.

Dream looked irritated and impatient again, like he was point zero seconds away from just hacking away at the nether rack with a pickaxe. George was beginning to become annoyed himself so he didn't attempt to lighten him up. Bad was the only one that still seemed calm as they continued onward.

"We probably should have stayed up top," Dream complained as they found another dead end and turned around to go left instead of right.

"Where all the monsters are roaming?" George asked with an incredulous tone. Dream glanced at him and George couldn't figure out his expression with the darn mask in the way.

Dream looked away and with a tinge of annoyance to his tone he muttered, "It's not like we can avoid the creatures here *forever*."

George felt a surge of irritation flare inside him. He understood why Dream was annoyed with their current situation but being annoyed at *him* wasn't going to do them any good. George frowned, biting his lip as he felt slow anger building. He'd never actually gotten angry at Dream before. Suddenly Bad glanced back at them, "That's true but the less time we spend around them and where they are the better it is for us."

"Okay but we're wasting time. Why don't we just start mining upwards from here?" Dream sighed loudly. Bad paused and seemed to actually be thinking that idea over.

"Do you think nether rack is able to be mined? It's such a weird texture," Bad asked aloud as he ran his fingers across the spongy texture.

"Couldn't hurt to try," George said as he shrugged, avoiding Dream's glance when he felt his eyes on him, "Besides who even knows if this tunnel opens back up. It could be endless dead ends."

"You're right George," Bad smiled, reaching into his pack for his pickaxe, "We aren't far underground either so let's just mine a path up."

As Bad began to mine into the wall by their side, George's eye caught movement beside him and glanced over to see Dream sliding up to stand next to him. He was going to immediately look away but Dream pursed his lips and spoke up almost quietly, "Hey...uh...sorry. I wasn't irritated at *you* or anything. I realize I sounded..."

"You sounded like you were irritated at me," George frowned, finally making eye contact with Dream, who was staring back, "I know *you* are confident that you can fight off monsters but not all of us are looking for fights you know?"

He wasn't sure where *that* came from but now he couldn't take it back. Dream's eyes widened slightly as he looked at George and then Dream looked away from him. It was clear he was kind of hurt by that, "I'm not *looking* for fights, George. I just don't want to be too scared that I avoid easier solutions."

George bristled, feeling his own brand of hurt at that. Dream thought he was a coward, didn't he? "You think I'm too scared?!"

Dream's eyes widened again and he backtracked immediately, putting his hands up as he sputtered awkwardly, "No I *wasn't*- I didn't mean...sorry, I'm doing a shitty job of explaining what I'm feeling."

"Apparently," George muttered, turning away from Dream. Bad was staring at them with wide eyes and he immediately looking away when George turned around, "I'm not a coward, Dream. I just want to be smart about this."

"I'm sorry," Dream frowned when George turned away at him, "I don't think you're a coward George...sorry I'm just saying the wrongs things...."

George flicked his eyes at Dream and relaxed slightly at his genuine tone. He rubbed at his own arm awkwardly, "We're just worked up, right? I...I wasn't trying to say you *aren't* being smart or

anything. I'm sorry too."

Dream gave him a little relieved smile and nodded, "It's okay...and I was just irritated and taking it out on you."

"I think I was doing the same," George smiled a little, feeling more tension ease away as he realized Dream wasn't mad at him or anything like that.

Dream's smile widened for some reason, "Aww, our first argument!"

"*What?*" George burst out laughing, already feeling lighter. Dream joined him in laughing until they heard Bad clear his throat. He was standing in a hole he was making in the wall.

"Are you muffins quite done now?" He grinned as he gestured behind him, "Because I have a bit of a staircase shape going. Wanna help me out?"

"Sure, sorry Bad," Dream laughed as he took off his pack to grab his own pickaxe and walk over to begin helping Bad mine away at the nether rack.

It turns out that nether rack was extremely easy to mine, easier than stone, and they were breaking through the top and onto solid ground in less than ten minutes. Dream went through first and he already had his sword out, just in case. This made George a bit relieved that Dream was taking the nether creatures seriously when earlier it seemed like he wasn't.

"I expected to at least see pigmen by now," Bad commented as he finally climbed next to George on the ground. George nodded, looking around but seeing no signs of life. Everything was just blackish and they still seemed to be surrounded by nether rack, but they were on the *surface* at least.

"Which way should we go now?" Dream asked hesitantly, looking over his shoulder at them. George hummed in thought, still taking in the surroundings. There was a cliff and George could tell that it was a steep fall, so there was no going down that way. The faint glow George spotted way in the distance in front of them meant there was lava so it probably wasn't wise to go that way either.

"How about over here?" Bad suggested and they both turned to look at him. He was spraying an arrow towards the staircase path they created down so that they wouldn't get totally lost. The last thing they all needed was to get too deep in the nether and lose their nether portal.

Bad was gesturing to the right but he looked a bit wary, "It leads to an open area though but its the only option unless we want to try and mine again."

"No thanks," Dream groaned, rolling his shoulder slowly. George snickered. Dream and Bad were the only ones with iron pickaxes so they did the mining earlier, "I think with all three of us armed

we'll be fine as long as we keep our eyes peeled."

George nodded in agreement, "And Bad can tell us if he spots a dangerous nether creature he knows!"

"Yeah," Bad smiled and nothing more really needed to be said. The three brought out their weapons as they walked towards the right and eventually walked around a corner into the open.

They immediately froze when several heads turned in their direction curiously. George gasped. Several pigmen were roaming around almost aimlessly and after glancing at them curiously, they went about their way without too much direction.

The pigmen were just as described in Bad's book. Parts of their bodies exposed their skeletal features and some even had skin hanging from their bodies. What was worse was the smell; they smelled like *death*. George swallowed and immediately looked away, feeling the urge to vomit. Bad looked worse off than him as he also looked away but had both his hands clamped over his mouth like he was preventing himself from throwing up.

Dream simply looked away and George couldn't tell how bothered he was with that stupid mask in the way. It was *always* in the way! Dream turned to them and spoke up cautiously, "You guys okay? Bad, you good?"

George simply nodded and Bad let out a little gasp, not looking up from the ground as he answered meekly, "I-I'm fine. I just...didn't think they'd look *that* decomposed. They look much gorier than I expected."

Dream nodded with a grim smile on his face as he patted Bad's shoulder to comfort him and George jolted when Dream's gaze crossed his. George opened his mouth to say something when a strange sob-like cry filled the air. All three of them jumped and whirled around to find out where it came from.

"What the *fuck* is that?!" Dream cursed loudly, clearly startled and another sob filled the air as a floating white creature hovered closer to where they were standing.

"Language Dream!" Bad frowned before his eyes widened, "Wait, that's a ghost!"

"*That's* a ghost?!" George cried out in shock, "I know you described it as some ghost-like creature but Bad that thing's *huge*!"

"I...I wasn't expecting it to be that big either," Bad replied, a spooked expression forming on his face, "We need to stay out of it's eyesight or it'll-"

All three flinched when the ghast seemed to ironically notice them in that moment and it literally screamed. Bad immediately yelled, "Move!"

Bad grabbed George by the sleeve before pulling him away with a yank as Dream and George noticed the projectile that looked similar to a *fireball* shooting at them. Dream jumped out of the way in time but when the fireball hit the ground it exploded and the force of it made Dream half stumble to the ground.

"Dream!" George gasped as he shrugged out of Bad's hold. He made to rush after Dream but another scream filled the air and he realized with horror that the fireball was headed right for him and Bad this time.

Bad tackled George away and they both grunted when they hit the ground harder than expected due to that blast. They heard Dream shouting after them but it was hard to hear over the almost constant screaming.

"Move, move!" George gasped as he pulled Bad away this time. The next blast hit in front of them instead of behind and they both cried out in surprise as they fell backwards.

"George! Bad!" Dream yelled, his tone a mix between worry, shock, and anger. George shook his head to clear it and glanced at Dream just as another scream echoed in the air.

He was stunned when Dream, who must have been running after them, jumped in front of where they were laying and actually hit the fireball with his diamond sword like he was hitting a ball with a bat. To his amazement, the fireball didn't explode on Dream but bounced off his sword and soared through the air, hitting the ghast. It screeched and the fireball blew up on it evaporating the ghast like it had been nothing more than mist.

"What the..." Bad trailed off, stunned. Dream turned and rushed to them immediately.

"Are you guys okay?! Are you burned at all?" He demanded as he knelt to them and scanned them over. Bad laughed.

"I'm fine...George?" Bad asked as he looked over at him. George blinked, realizing he was just staring.

"No, I'm fine, uh...not burned. I can't believe that just happened," George muttered in shock. Dream deflated with relief and smirked.

"Well I don't know why I did that. I just didn't want it to hit you guys," Dream explained as his mouth tightened, "I had no idea it was going to backfire on it."

"At least we know how to kill it," Bad grinned as he stood slowly. George blinked again when Dream shuffled closer to him and held his hands out like he wanted to help George up. George blushed a little but smiled, putting his hands in Dream's, allowing him to help pull George to his feet.

"Thanks," George said and Dream smiled briefly before pulling away and glancing over his shoulder.

"I see a place where we can rest for a second," Dream announced as he studied the path in front of them, "Let's get there and eat something."

"*Now* you're talking," George joked and Bad laughed lightly. Bad nudged his arm against George's as they followed behind Dream. They both made it a point to not look too long at any of the pigmen they passed. George shuddered at the way Dream didn't seem affected. Was he used to seeing things like that...? George was sure he probably was.

They made it to the small indent in the wall and they all sat down close to each other on a small area of raised nether brick. Bad distributed some cut strips of meat and they snacked in silence. George noted that Dream was eyeing their surroundings wearily, one hand on the hilt of his diamond sword.

He sighed before eating with renewed vigor. The nether was just so *hot* and George was sure he probably had huge sweat stains in his clothes by now. While he was initially excited to explore something new, he was already ready to leave the nether. He couldn't imagine anyone being trapped here with these dangerous creatures and sweltering heat.

George didn't realize he'd stopped eating and was just staring off with a frown until Dream stood up and stretched, "I'm done eating. I think I'm gonna wander a bit to see which way we should go."

"You aren't going off alone!" Bad yelled incredulously and George rose an eyebrow at Dream, who laughed a little at Bad.

"I'm staying within sight. I'm not dumb," Dream joked and Bad sighed, shaking his head, "I'm serious. I'll be within shouting distance. I just want to check the surroundings for a second. Two minutes tops, okay?"

"Fine," Bad drawled, narrowing his eyes, "But you better shout if you're in trouble or anything."

"Yeah, yeah," Dream waved off Bad's concern and George bit his lip. He kind of agreed with Bad. It didn't matter that he wasn't going far, maybe he shouldn't be leaving their side.

It was too late to say anything to him because Dream was already walking around the corner where

they were sitting, his diamond sword ready in one hand. George sighed and continued to eat. Dream was a big boy, he didn't need them mothering him. He'd been keeping himself alive for years....worrying like this was only annoying Dream.

"George?" Bad whispered and George looked over at him in confusion. Why was he being so quiet all of a sudden?

"Yeah, what's up?" George asked, tilting his head to the side curiously. Bad glanced behind him as if he were making sure nothing could hear him.

"There was something I've been wanting to talk to you about," Bad said before biting his lip in hesitation. George rose an eyebrow.

"Oh yeah? Right now?" He asked, feeling somewhat confused and wary.

"It's just something that's been on my mind," Bad explained after he swallowed another bite of his meat, "Things I've noticed like back at the abandoned village...."

"Things you've noticed?" George parroted, still completely lost as to what Bad was talking about.

"About you and Dream," Bad continued, eyeing George, who stilled immediately, "George I know I've kind of asked already...well not really *this* specifically...but do you know what it means to have a crush on someone?"

George went silent for a second as he thought about that, "A crush...as in an attraction for someone?"

"Yeah...."

"I have found a couple of people attractive before..." George admitted as he thought about the people in his home village, "But I didn't like them as a person and they *hated* me so..."

Bad frowned, "That's terrible."

"Why are you asking, Bad?" George hesitated, his fingers curling around the meat in his hands. It seemed like a really weird time to be asking this.

"I guess I was just wondering what you thought of Dream," Bad trailed off, unsure of what he wanted to ask exactly.

"Of Dream? Dream's an amazing person and he's my first best friend. He doesn't treat me like

anyone else," George smiled slightly as he thought about it but when he noticed something odd in Bad's expression he frowned, "Why are you asking me about Dream?"

"I....maybe I'm butchering this but I'm just curious if...if you find Dream attractive," Bad asked as he blushed from embarrassment. George's eyes widened at the unexpected question.

"I-*what*? Dream's...well, Dream's not *bad* looking...." George confessed, turning red as he said this. He suddenly felt incredibly embarrassed talking about this and wished Bad would stop. His heart began thudding in his chest as he thought about Dream's face.

Bad smiled, "You're always looking and smiling at Dream. Plus you touch him a lot so I guess I was just wanting to know if you had feelings for Dream...."

If possible, George's eyes widened further and his heart skipped a couple of beats. That's what it seemed like? Did he really look at Dream and touch him that much? Was it bad? Is it *weird*? Bad frowned when he noticed the somewhat panicked look on George's face, unable to tell what the other is thinking, "I know you've probably never had feelings for someone before and are very confused so I just wanted to let you know I'm here for you, George."

"I...I...." George stammered, feeling himself grow hot with some kind of mortification, "I don't know...I-"

"It's alright not to know right now George. I didn't mean to upset you," Bad said seriously, placing one of his hands on George's soothingly. He obviously caught George off guard with this and he felt bad about it now, "You should think about and notice how you act with Dream versus how you act with others. That might help you figure out your feelings."

George nodded, unable to say anything. His hands were shaking as he stared down at them. George wasn't completely stupid. Bad was...asking if he were in love with Dream? Like *romantic* feelings? George never even considered that. Did it seem that way to *Dream*? This whole time...was George being weird?

George forced himself to think of something else to calm his rapidly beating heart and the panic welling in his chest.

Bad and George finished eating quietly a few minutes later. They were just standing and shrugging on their packs when they heard Dream shout in alarm. George was already running before he even registered that Dream might be in trouble. Bad was right on his heels and he crashed into George when George abruptly stopped in horror.

"Guys! *It's*-"

Dream saw them but his shout was cut off when he was forced to defend himself. There were multiple piglins rushing and trying to attack him. Some of them were wearing actual armor.

"Dream!" George yelled, rushing forward. He clutched at his iron sword and immediately jumped in to block a hit that Dream would have been unable to avoid since two piglins were already pressing down on him. Dream flashed him a look of gratitude. George briefly counted at least seven piglins in the group trying to get at them.

An arrow whizzed past Dream and into the throat of one piglin behind him, who squealed in agony. Bad armed another arrow into his crossbow, looking grim and unrepentant as he began aiming again. George grunted when he blocked another piglin's sword.

"Oh muffin!" Bad gasped but both Dream and George couldn't look away from their own fight to see what was wrong. The dying piglin on the ground was still squealing loudly in agony and it made George wince, "Guys! More are coming! We should go!"

"What?!" Dream gasped and the minor distraction, no matter how brief, allowed one of the piglins Dream was fighting to cut him across the arm. Dream hissed in pain and jumped away, swinging his sword at the piglin in retaliation.

George managed to push the piglin he was fighting away and gasped when Bad came seemingly from no where and grabbed his wrist, pulling him away at a dead run. George stumbled before glancing over his shoulder and panickily yelling out, "Dream, *c'mon!!*"

Dream cursed and kicked one of the piglins away from him before running after them. George could see the piglins chasing after them and, in the distance, more coming to help. They needed to find somewhere to hide or hopefully outrun them to get away or they might be in trouble.

"T-There's too many of them," George yelped when the piglin group started getting closer. They weren't exactly fast but didn't have much problem keeping up with them. George was shocked.

"Wait! Dream! Remember what Techno said?!" Bad gasped as he looked over his shoulder at Dream, who caught up with them. Dream looked back at him blankly, "Gold! They might want *gold!* Try throwing some of our gold ingots on the ground!"

"Seriously!?" Dream asked almost incredulously. Bad nodded and Dream rushed to get the gold ingots out of his pack. It took a good minute and George's lungs were beginning to burn with how long they were running. Dream immediately discarded a few gold ingots on the ground but they didn't stop running.

Eventually they looked back again and noticed the piglins slowed down to inspect the gold on the ground before halting completely. Bad pulled George behind a small hill of nether rack and all three of them collapsed to the ground, breathing deeply. George inhaled quickly, "Oh thank God!"

"The nether sucks," Bad gasped out. Dream started laughing, wheezing really, and they both looked at him oddly, "How did you even get tangled up with them Dream?"

It took a second for Dream to calm, "I wasn't far from you guys and I really *was* just looking around. I noticed a big lava lake and as I was looking for a decent path I heard a weird sort of oinking behind me. At first I thought it was one of those pigmen but when I heard a bow-string being pulled back I turned to see a few piglins there so I yelled out."

"Whoa," George's eyes widened, "You're lucky you heard it before it was able to shoot you."

Dream nodded, "Yeah..."

"Well, you guys good? We should start walking again," Bad sighed, placing one hand on his chest, "I don't want to stand around for too long."

"I hear you," George sighed as well, "Let's go before those piglins decide to try and find us or something."

As they began walking, George noticed out of the corner of his eye that Dream was keeping pace with him the way he always did whenever they walked places. Why did it always end up with them walking side by side? George blinked when Dream looked over at him and then smiled. He blushed at having been caught staring but then he noticed Dream fidgeting slightly as they walked.

"You're moving around a lot," George commented stupidly and then blushed more when Dream glanced at him oddly, "I...I mean, you're fidgeting. Are you okay?"

"Oh. Yeah, its just adrenaline, you know?" Dream grinned, showing teeth, "I'm just thinking about how I could have handled that battle better and stuff..."

George rose an eyebrow, "You say that as if you *liked* fighting them."

"Well, a little," Dream admitted with a casual shrug while George's mouth dropped open and Bad turned to finally look at them over his shoulder with a shocked expression, "I like fighting. I was still a bit scared cause, ya know, I was outnumbered but I like challenging myself to figure out how to get out of dire situations like that."

George stared at him, feeling amazed. Dream was thinking about all that? George had just been scared and didn't want anyone to die or get really hurt. He knew to an extent that Dream had to learn to fight but he didn't realize that Dream actually *liked* fighting. He wasn't sure how to feel about that just yet.

"Oh I see. That's an awesome way of looking at it," Bad laughed and Dream smirked as they all kept walking forward. George stayed quiet, unsure what to say so he opted to not say anything. He could feel Dream's eyes on him again though but refused to look up.

It wasn't until George felt Dream's arm accidentally brush against his a few minutes later that he jumped, shifting away immediately. Dream looked at him in surprise and raised an eyebrow but George quickly looked away, flustered. He thought back to what Bad said and felt distressed about his reaction.

"George?" Dream murmured quietly, sounding confused, "You okay?"

"Y-Yeah," George nodded, still not meeting his eyes and hating the way he stuttered, "You just surprised me that's all."

"Oh..." Something in Dream's tone told George that Dream didn't fully believe him but there wasn't much he could do about that. It was just an accidental brush of their arms, he didn't have to jump and move away like that! Its not as if that accidental brush was romantic, right? George frowned, thinking a little too much about it.

"Guys!" Bad shouted suddenly and George jumped a few inches in the air. Dream seemed just as startled but he was still staring at George so he wasn't sure if Dream was startled by him or Bad, "I see some blue in the distance!"

"You mean like a warped forest?" Dream gasped as they all stared in the direction Bad was pointing. George could just make out some blue and what looked like an overgrown mushroom the size of a tree. George was floored, "We should go there!"

"Really?" George trailed off, a bit hesitant. They turned to him, "Techno said that Endermen love to roam the warped forest..."

Dream tilted his head and acted as if that fact didn't bother him which made another pang of annoyance surge through George. How the hell can he act so confident all the time? Surely there's a limit! "Yeah he did and he's probably right but all we have to do is not look them in the eyes."

"And if the group trapped in the nether are connected to the pillagers with the crescent-shaped tattoos then they'll probably be close to a warped forest!" Bad said brightly and George felt any protests die on his tongue at that. Bad and Dream were extremely excited and eager to find any leads that led to them to finding their loved ones. Maybe George was just being a stick in the mud.

"Okay, let's go," George sighed and Bad beamed, "I'm gonna laugh if you guys end up getting chased by Endermen though."

They all knew that wasn't true but Dream laughed for some reason and George's mouth twitched in a small smile as they rushed to the warped forest together, avoiding narrow paths close to cliffs.

Once they were there, George felt his eyes widen in wonder at how eerily beautiful the warped

forest looked. Now that they were closer, George could make out little mushrooms on the ground along with strange looking grass and vines. Everything was such a pretty blue color, but George was left wondering if he saw the same blue as his two friends did.

They walked around, taking in the sights when Bad yelped. George froze when he heard something zoom past him and glanced at the ground to see something with long black legs in the area behind him. Dream chuckled at their reaction, "No one look up. We're fine. Just keep walking."

"How are you so *calm*?" George grumbled, annoyed. He paused when a tan hand grabbed his pale wrist and pulled him along. George looked up slightly to see Dream looking ahead of them at the ground with a serious expression. Then George noticed Bad watching them with a lowered head and he gasped, pulling his wrist out of Dream's hand immediately.

Dream whirled around to look at him worriedly until he realized nothing was actually wrong. Bad looked surprised and George couldn't bring himself to look at either of them. Dream frowned, "What's wrong?"

"N-Nothing, let's just keep moving!" George rushed to say as he fast-walked past a bewildered Dream. He heard his friends following behind him but his heart was racing. He hated this; *hated* it. Whenever Dream was around him now all he could think about was what Bad told him. It left him flustered and unsure of himself.

Thankfully, for whatever reason, Dream didn't question his odd little episode and they weaved through the forest, avoiding Endermen as they went. As it turns out, Technoblade was right. Endermen really loved warped forests.

And then about twenty five minutes into their walk through the warped forest, George felt eyes on him. He glanced at his friends but they were both not looking at him. They were studying their surroundings just like he had been, looking for signs of any human life or a nether fortress. George still felt eyes on him and broke out into a sweat that was not at all related to the heat of the nether.

He was briefly distracted from this when Bad spoke up suddenly, "What should we do when we find a nether fortress?"

"What do you mean?" Dream questioned as he paused walking. George couldn't shake the feeling that he was still being watched and that set him on edge.

"Like when we find a nether fortress what should we *do*? Should we just enter one or...?" Bad trailed off, biting his lip as his eyes glazed over in thought, "I don't know what to expect exactly."

"Neither do I but I think we're prepared. If we're lucky there'll be people there," Dream grinned and George frowned.

"We shouldn't assume the people we come across will be *good* people," George warned and his friends looked at him, "What if they're connected to that group you're looking for? What if they *are* that group you're looking for?"

Dream and Bad's eyes widened but George continued as his nerves made him feel like he was having a mini anxiety attack, "Even if not, what if there's just *monsters* there?"

"Then we'll handle the monsters," Dream told him easily and George scowled, irritated again.

"We don't know what *kind* of monsters they'll be. How do you know we can handle them?" George challenged with a glare and to his surprise, Dream seemed to be getting riled up again. Bad looked at them uneasily.

"Why are you so pessimistic George?" Dream growled and George flinched, his heart jumping in his chest at the fact that Dream was getting angry at him, "You always have to look at the down side of everything don't you? If we come across monsters we can assess the situation and *handle* it!"

George felt overwhelmed by all the feelings and anxiety he was experiencing. He felt enraged and hurt as he shouted, "Pessimistic? I'm being *realistic* which you are clearly not able to do all the time! Not everyone can be as confident as you! There's too much we don't know about the nether and the things in it so how do you think we can just assess a situation as if it'll go the way we *want* it to?!"

Dream bristled, obviously offended, "I *am* being realistic! Stop acting like I'm some barbarian that fights first and asks questions later!"

"You *are* like that though!" George yelled, his hands clenching into fists, "It's like you're not cautious at times when you *should* be! And then you act like you can handle anything that comes your way when you really *can't*, Dream!"

Dream went quiet and when George actually *looked* at him, Dream's eyes were wide behind his mask and he looked incredibly hurt. George's heart leapt in his throat. He didn't mean to let all his frustrations out like that but now he couldn't take it back. George swallowed and looked away from Dream.

"Guys...c'mon," Bad whined, looking really worried, "I can't believe you're fighting like this...."

George felt his eyes burn slightly. He still felt hurt by what Dream said about him and he was still angry at him. He wasn't *trying* to hurt Dream's feelings but he couldn't stand by as Dream acted like everything would be easy to handle or work out the way they wanted it to. George felt like eyes were on him again and he felt frustrated. Was he just being a baby?

"I'm...just on edge, okay?" George swallowed around the lump in his throat, "I keep feeling like someone's *watching* me."

"What?" Bad asked, raising an eyebrow as he looked all around. George peeked around them as well but when he saw Dream just standing there quietly, his heart skipped a few beats. His head was tilted away so that you couldn't see his eyes or lips, just the side of his mask.

Bad shivered, "Now *I'm* starting to become paranoid. I feel it too. Let's keep moving, okay?"

George nodded and bit his lip when Dream still didn't speak up but immediately moved in the direction they were going before they stopped. Bad looked at George worriedly but George stayed silent as well. He wanted to apologize to Dream but he wasn't sure what to say exactly. Some of what he said was how he actually felt after all.

They walked in awkward stone silence for a few moments before Dream stopped abruptly and finally spoke, "Oh my God...I think I see a fortress!"

Bad and George whirled around to look off to the left where Dream was looking. Sure enough, there seemed to be some dark-bricked structure way off in the distance, so far you had to squint to see it. It seemed to be tucked into the nether rack while other parts of it stretched out over a lava lake. It was *huge!*

Dream turned to them and opened his mouth slightly like he was going to say something but then his eyes went wide and he actually shivered. George couldn't help but blurt out worriedly, "Dream?"

"I...I think you guys are right," He said suddenly as his eyes hardened and he looked all around, "I feel like someone's watching us."

George's eyes widened and he heard Bad gasp lightly. George gripped the handle of his iron sword so hard his knuckles turned white and he looked all around but couldn't *see* anyone spying on them. Dream ground out, "Maybe its just Endermen?"

"Maybe..." George trailed off.

"We should definitely stake out the fortress *before* we go in," Bad said quietly and they both looked at him, "I think we should get closer. Just close enough to see if anything's around."

George felt a little more relieved as he nodded, "We should observe it a little before going in."

Dream didn't say anything but he began sneaking towards the nether fortress just the same. George

and Bad followed his lead but George kept looking all around, just in case. It still felt like they were being watched. George was glad it wasn't just *him* that felt it.

"Hey George..." Bad whispered and George glanced over at where he was walking by his side. Bad was frowning, "Do you really think that the pillagers could be the ones in the nether?"

George frowned as well, "I think it's possible. I just know that ever since we got into the nether I've been anxious. I have a vague sense that we shouldn't be here."

Bad stared back at him worriedly but didn't say anything in return. As they got closer to the nether fortress, George felt his shoulders tense. He felt random goosebumps form on his arms and he shivered. Suddenly Dream gasped and before he realized what was happening, Dream grabbed both him and Bad by the arm before shoving them behind a small stack of nether rack.

"I think I saw something...or *someone*," Dream explained in a whisper, his eyes wide. George felt his heart drop into his stomach, "It definitely looked like it could be a person..."

"Really?" Bad asked with owl-like eyes.

"Yeah but they were heavily geared in gold armor and I think they have weapons," Dream added with a wary expression, "Lets-"

Before Dream could finish his sentence, there was whistling in the air. *Very loud* whistling. George winced with a gasp. Bad covered his ears and Dream whirled his head around to look in all directions. When he looked to the left, Dream gasped, "Fuck!"

"Language!" Bad said sharply but they turned to the left and all the color left George's face when he saw what looked like multiple people with weapons running in the general direction they were hiding. The whistling stopped.

"Fuck, *fuck*, I think they know we're here," Dream cursed, his hand curling around his weapon. His eyes were still wide, "They might attack us."

"Maybe we should run and hide somewhere else?" Bad panicked, "What if George is right that they aren't good people?"

"But they're supposedly trapped right? If we explain-" Dream's own panicked speech was cut off when a couple of arrows hit the ground near their side like a warning.

"Come on out. You're surrounded and you won't escape," A male voice called out, sounding both serious but almost bored.

They tensed and George felt his heart hammering in his chest from fear. Dream ground his teeth together and Bad gripped his crossbow with both hands, his eyes almost wild with anxiety. The man continued, "We *know* there are three of you there. Don't make us come get you. It'll be worse."

George couldn't help the small gasp that escaped his throat. How did they see them that clearly to know there were only three of them? Dream caught his and Bad's eye and jerked his head in a nod, but his eyes flashed with seriousness. Dream stood slowly but kept his weapon out in front of him. George and Bad hesitantly followed his lead, putting all three of them in view.

They stopped in shock when they saw it was more than just one guy. It was four and all of them had gold armor with expressions on their faces that showed they didn't feel threatened by Dream or any of them at *all*. They did pause slightly at the sight of the mask Dream was wearing though.

"At least you're smart enough to know when you're outmatched," Another male spoke up, almost smug and George watched Dream's hands shake with anger, "Here I thought you'd make us come get you."

"Who says we're outmatched?" Dream spoke up calmly, but the anger was in his tone, "There's four of you and three of us."

The group of men stayed silent but surprisingly didn't seem bothered in the least. One of them even laughed loudly. Dream growled and Bad looked almost panicked, "W-Wait, we're not bad people or anything! We just heard there was a group trapped in the nether and came to help!"

George and Dream both knew that Bad was trying to diffuse the hostile tension but they were stunned when the men all looked between each other like they were darkly amused. Then suddenly Bad sucked in a breath and Dream looked like he'd been sucker-punched, leaving George wondering why they reacted like that so randomly.

Then he noticed it. One of the men had his head tilted towards another as they spoke to each other and it put his neck in view full as well as the *spiky crescent-shaped tattoo* that adorned it. George felt cold shock run through him and he quickly looked to Dream.

"You...its *you*!" Dream gasped, his eyes wild with rage and his entire body shaking. The men seemed just slightly caught off guard by the change in Dream's demeanor, "It's actually *you*!"

"Think he lost his mind?" One man asked sarcastically but then Dream snarled and charged at them with no warning. George gasped and Bad still seemed stunned, rooted to the spot with shock.

"Dream, *wait*!" George yelled as Dream immediately went to attack the closest man. He didn't even make it to the group of men before an arrow that seemingly came from no where pierced Dream through the shoulder. Dream bit back a howl of pain and stumbled back, "*DREAM!*"

"Oh my God!" Bad gasped, finally breaking out of his stunned daze. For some reason, Dream seemed to be moving slower than normal even with his injury and the men immediately dashed forward. Two of them kicked Dream to the ground and held him there. Bad aimed his crossbow and shot one of the men in the arm.

George turned around wildly, looking in the direction where the arrow came from and saw a man hidden up on a cliff to the right. He was aiming a bow towards them blankly.

"Don't even think of attacking anymore," One of the men started saying as they walked closer to Bad and George. It was clear they were talking more to Bad, who was shakily aiming his crossbow at them, "Unless you *want* the masked man to suffer."

George felt like he was close to hyperventilating but he did as directed when one of them demanded they release their weapons. Dream was still struggling slowly on the ground, snarling in the faces of the men that were holding him down, "What did you do to me?!"

"Arrow of slowness," One of them explained blankly, like it didn't matter if they knew or not, "You're our prisoners now and will do as instructed."

"Like *hell* we will!" Dream spat out and George was sure he'd never seen Dream this enraged. George didn't fight it when he was grabbed by the arm by one the men.

"If you do not listen your friends will suffer then," The male said in a simple tone and Dream stilled, like the hazy fog of anger was finally leaving at least a little. He glanced up and his gaze crossed George's, "Don't make this harder for yourselves."

Another male grabbed Bad by the arms while the other two hauled Dream to his feet. Dream struggled a little but blood was running down his arm in a tiny stream. George frowned worriedly. Would they treat Dream?

They were pushed towards the nether fortress and George tried to study his surroundings so he could remember in case of an escape attempt but the panic he was still feeling made everything seem to go by in a rush. Once they made it to the fortress they went through a large archway and led down some steps. It seemed like the pillagers really decked the place out and made it somewhat livable.

There were crafting tables tucked here and there and George saw one room with a blaze stand. There were numerous pillagers wandering around like they *lived* here. George broke out in a cold sweat and he realized he was breathing too quickly.

The men holding them stopped and began to debate, "We need to take them to the dungeons for now."

"Yeah and we should separate them," Another said and George actually gasped, but it didn't draw their attention. What *did* draw their attention was Dream struggling anew.

"No!" Dream growled out as he tried to struggle out of their hold. His injury made the effort useless, "*No!*"

"And take their stuff," The third male, the one holding Bad, spoke up, not phased in the least.

George gasped again when he was stripped of his pack harshly and he stumbled before being grabbed again. The pillagers grabbed Bad and Dream's pack as well. Then one of the pillagers walked in front of Dream and ripped the mask from his face. Dream started snarling and George found it looked just as scary then as it did when he had the mask *on* his face.

They were forced down a hallway where it split down three different ways. George was being pushed to the left suddenly and he hissed in pain at the tight grip the pillager had on his arm. Dream began shouting, almost panicked, which sounded odd given he also still sounded absolutely enraged, "No! *George!*"

"D-Dream!" George shouted back in his own panic as he was being pushed down the left stairs while Dream was being pushed down the ones in front. He assumed that must mean Bad was also being separated to the right staircase, "Bad!"

"Stop struggling," One of the two pillagers holding him warned and George tried glaring at them but failed miserably.

His attention was caught when a lit hallway came into view followed by iron metal bars. He inhaled sharply in shock to see that there were cells and people were actually inside them. It looked like there were two people a cell. A lot of those they passed looked defeated or some were sleeping, not really paying them any attention. How many people did they have here?!

He was forced further down the hall and he heard some chatter cut abruptly as he came into view of more iron cells. Before George could really have a look around, he was thrust into a cell right as it was opened and he stumbled to the ground with a grunt. George glared at the men behind him but they didn't even look at him twice before walking off the way they came.

"Hey," A voice called out next to him and George jumped, throwing himself back. There was a man squatting next to him. He had gold leggings and the rest of his armor was iron. He was surprised to see the man armored up before he realized the pillagers never took *their* armor off them either, "You okay?"

The man had black hair and amber-brown eyes. There was some stubble on his chin and under his nose. He blinked when the man rose an eyebrow at him and realized he never answered, "Oh...y-yeah, I'm okay I think."

"That's good," The man said as he leaned back to sit cross-legged on the ground, "Welcome to the cells."

George rose an eyebrow before jumping when he heard laughter. He glanced to the left to see two people occupying the cell in front of theirs. Both were male and looked younger than George. One had chocolate brown hair and light brown eyes while the other had ink black hair and eyes so dark they looked black.

The brown haired male was the one laughing and he grinned when George looked at him, "Sorry. Its been awhile since we've had a newcomer."

"Not true," The ink-black haired male said as he nudged his brown-haired cellmate, "There was a newcomer just two weeks ago, remember? They weren't placed in *here* though."

George felt both curious and lost, "Someone was captured just two weeks ago?"

"Yup," The ink-black haired guy answered, nodding as both he and his cellmate studied George, "Don't know who they are though but I heard it was just one person and it's a guy."

"Most people are captured in the overworld though," George's cellmate added in and George looked over at him. His cellmate was also studying him curiously, "That's how most of us are captured. Usually people aren't brave enough to come to the nether."

"Brave?" George snorted, feeling a rush of emotions all at once, "Try overconfidence..."

George thought of Dream and their argument. His heart clenched tightly in his chest and he felt a stupid urge to cry. His cellmate seemed to just know he was getting upset because he spoke up softly, "We all get that way sometimes...was it just you that was captured?"

"No my two friends were captured too but they separated us," George explained, frowning sadly. His cellmate nodded.

"They do that," The chocolate-brown haired male sighed, "When people are captured in groups they separated them so they don't get any ideas of escaping."

"That and its easier to control you if they can threaten your friends' safety," George's cellmate explained with a dark look to his amber eyes. George's heart skipped a beat and he groaned.

Why couldn't Dream have just *listened* to him more?

"What's your name by the way?" The ink-black haired male asked him curiously.

"I-I'm George," George stammered around the lump in his throat. He tried to reign in his emotions.

"Nice! I'm Quackity," The black-haired male grinned and George blinked stupidly at the name. Quackity laughed at his expression, "I love the way people look at me when they learn my name!"

George's cellmate snorted in some sort of fond amusement while Quackity's cellmate laughed before looking at George, "I'm Karl! I actually have a *normal* name don't worry! I'm not like these weirdos!"

George chuckled a little, their easygoing atmosphere beginning to calm him down tremendously, "Thank God."

There was a distant sound that almost sounded like murmuring and George noticed Karl, Quackity and his own cellmate immediately go quiet. They tensed and George tensed as well, somehow figuring that the murmuring wasn't good. George realized his feeling was right when several pillagers came into view, all of them carrying swords. They stopped in front of George's cell.

"Time to work. You and....you there, come on," A pillager gestured to George's cellmate and the other pointed at Quackity. George felt himself grow hot with panic. He had no idea what was happening. What work were they talking about?!

George's cellmate stood up, his expression blank like he was used to automatically forming it that way. Quackity looked serious but neither male attempted to defy the pillagers and George was left wondering if they ever tried before. He shivered, unsure he wanted to actually know.

"W-Wait!" George blurted as his cellmate went to step out of their shared cell. His cellmate looked at him, shock flashing through his eyes briefly, "W-What's going on? What *work*?! A-Also y-you never told me your name!"

His cellmate ignored the impatient pillagers behind him to grin almost cheekily at George like he immediately decided he *liked* him, "Don't worry, Karl will fill you in."

Karl nodded almost grimly from where he was glaring at the pillagers in the cell he shared with Quackity. George's cellmate turned to walk out before the pillagers got too angry and looked over his shoulder at George, giving him a small wave, "I'm Sappap by the way. See you later!"

And then George's eyes slowly widened as it felt like the entire world shifted off it's axis.

Yeah I really ended it there....
coming from a mile away though!

I'm sure many of you saw that

Anyways, much more will be explained in the next chapter about what's going on if you're confused! Let me know what you think! Thanks for reading!

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Things are discovered as the prisoners get to know each other; emotional rollercoasters are had.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Hope you're all doing well! I was SO excited for this chapter! And OMG around 400 kudos and almost 90 bookmarks! That's insane, thank you so much!

WARNING: There's a description of a panic attack (don't want to trigger anyone) and also, there are a lot of new names that come up and new information exchanged so let me know in the comments if you're ever confused!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"I'm Sapnap by the way. See you later!"

What? What, what, what, what, what, what, *what?!*

"George? Hey, George!" Karl was calling out to him, his voice pitching slightly higher in panic, "*George!*"

George gasped and his chest felt tighter. He gasped again and realized he must have been holding his breath without even noticing it. His chest ached and he shakily forced himself to calm down, drawing in slower breaths.

"George, please answer me!" Karl begged and when George glanced at him, he dizzily noticed that Karl's hands were tightly wrapped around the iron bars of his cell, "What happened? Are you okay?"

"I-I'm fine," George replied, still sounding out of breath, "I just...got shocked..."

"There's no need to panic so much George," Karl said soothingly, not understanding the full extent of George's shock, "I'll explain everything I can, alright?"

"I'm freaking out...Sapnap...he's actually *here!*" George gasped out, feeling slightly hysterical at the

flow emotions he was experiencing now. He couldn't pinpoint it. Disbelief? Shock? Happiness? Sadness? Excitement?

Karl's expression morphed into a confused one, "Okay you lost me. What do you mean he's actually here...?"

"Karl...Karl *listen*, I've been traveling...I've been helping my friend look for Sapnap," George explained in a rush, "And he's actually *here*!"

"What do....oh, *oh*!" Karl looked confused for one second before his eyes widened comically and his jaw dropped opened, "You *know* Sapnap?"

George shook his head, "N-Not, like, personally or anything. Dream does..."

"Whose Dream?" Karl asked, looking lost but his eyes were light with growing excitement. George finally paused, feeling himself settling down. Then he felt confused and almost a bit sad.

"Sapnap doesn't talk about Dream?" He asked hesitantly, unsure, "Sapnap is Dream's best friend...Dream's been looking for him for five years now since the day he was captured."

Karl looked absolutely stunned, "What...what the *honk*?!"

"Huh?" George retorted stupidly, surprised by the random word. He supposed that was a mannerism unique to the male the way 'muffin' was to Bad. He almost smiled.

"I, well, you see....Sapnap...he doesn't really talk about his past or where he came from..." Karl trailed off, looking down at the ground with eyebrows drawn, "We asked once and he said he lost everyone when he was captured."

George's eyes widened as he realized what that meant and his chest filled with despair, "Oh....*oh no*....he doesn't think Dream is alive...."

Karl's head snapped up at that and he frowned, "I guess not..."

It was awkwardly silent for a few minutes as George came down from the shock of meeting Sapnap. Karl appeared to be deep in thought. George took one steadying breath and then another before sorting all the questions he had in his head.

When George finally spoke up, Karl jumped a little, "Um, Karl...I have so many questions I don't even know where to start really...but um, what work did the pillagers need Sapnap and Quackity for?"

"Oh, that..." Karl trailed off, a troubled look forming on his face, "I'm not the greatest at explaining myself so bare with me and interrupt if you're confused alright?"

"Okay," George nodded patiently and Karl sighed deeply, staring at the ground.

"The pillagers use us to do their dirty work for them," Karl explained with no hidden disgust in his tone, "And by that I mean they make us kill nether creatures for them for their drops; Endermen specifically."

George jolted physically, "So they really are looking for ender pearls?"

"Yeah that's their priority," Karl replied before looking at George in confusion, "You already knew that?"

"No, I...it was just a theory or rumor about the pillagers," George explained as he licked his lips. George went into detail about how the pillagers could possibly be a group that worships the Ender dragon based off their crescent-shaped tattoos.

Karl went wide-eyed, "They never tell us *why* we're getting all this stuff for them...but that actually doesn't sound too crazy."

"So, to recap so far, they're capturing people and taking them here to work for them? And by that it means you guys have been killing nether creatures for them?" George reiterated, frowning.

"Yes," Karl answered with a small nod, "Though they also make us work around *here* a little bit too. Just like building small stuff for them and cleaning."

"So basically like slaves?" George retorted, feeling rage surging forward in his chest. It must have been in his tone because Karl flicked his eyes towards him and nodded with an empathic expression.

It went quiet for a moment until George considered something, "You'd think if they needed ender pearls that they'd have enough by now."

"What?" Karl asked, looking at George in surprise.

"It's been years since they've been capturing people and making them get drops from nether creatures right? Then why don't they have enough of what they need by now?" George questioned intently, tilting his head in confusion. Karl blinked at him before his expression morphed into a wary one.

"Well that's because....uh..." Karl bit his lip and look distressed, making George's eyes widen. Was there no answer or was it hard to think of one? Karl sighed, his shoulders slumping noticeably as he looked sad, "It's because the drops are rare in the nether for one, unlike the overworld, and also....people *die* here all the time trying to fight the mobs...or due to lava."

George sucked in a breath as his eyes widened a tad further, finally understanding why Karl looked so devastated answering that one. George was replying before he really thought about what he was saying, "Eh? People die often here....is that why they keep getting more prisoners?"

"Yes," Karl nodded, not looking up from the ground as he brought his knees to his chest and hugged them, "They don't care if we die. They'll try to save us if their own lives won't be in danger and that's only because they need all the slaves they can get."

George glared at nothing in particular, another prick of rage surging forth as he glanced down the hall at all the people in other cells. The ones that were either blankly staring into nothing, or looked defeated, or were sleeping. How cruel...then something hit George and he gasped, earning Karl's attention, "What is it?"

"If...if people commonly die here...then that means Sapnap's really tough," George blurted, feeling stupid afterwards. However, Karl blinked in surprise before he laughed, a bright smile on his face.

"Well, yeah he is! He's a tough bastard," Karl spoke fondly and George was amazed to see the warm look in his eyes. It reminded him of when Dream talked about Sapnap, "But uh...Sapnap...he's been here the longest."

"The longest?" George parroted before the words sunk in. George's eyes widened again.

"Yeah, he's seen some things and knows the most about this place," Karl explained as he looked blank. Then he added more quietly, "Everyone that was brought here before or with him has passed by now. He puts on a brave and tough front but it really gets to him, you know?"

"Oh...." George frowned sadly, sorrow clenching his chest.

"There's a lot of history here for Sapnap," Karl sighed, "It's better if you wait to ask *him* yourself about it though."

George agreed with Karl inwardly. Trying to get personal information about Sapnap from someone else wasn't the right thing to do here so George changed the subject, "Can I ask you how long *you've* been here Karl?"

Karl's eyes widened like he wasn't expecting George to care about his personal story. George gave a sad smile. Karl blinked at the ground, "Uh, for me I've been here for almost two years now I think."

"Oh..." George's heart fell to his feet.

"The pillagers treat those of us that have survived longer than a year differently," Karl added and George jolted when he noticed a dark look in Karl's eyes that didn't suit the cheerful, easygoing boy, "They make us go out more than the others."

"I see," George frowned, grinding his teeth, "That's....barbaric at best."

Karl looked at him, the darkness fading from his eyes as he looked a little amused, "Barbaric....that's the best way to describe them I guess..."

George snorted, grinning to himself. Karl let out a little chuckle before he looked at George. His expression turned into one of small wonder, "I can't believe it....so Sapnap's best friend that he thought died is alive and he's here, huh? Sapnap will probably die when he hears about it."

"Hopefully not," George retorted, trying to imagine how the conversation will go down, "I'm really glad he's alive though. Dream never doubted he was and I always found that amazing. It's been five years and he refused to doubt."

Karl's eyes softened, "Dream sounds like a great guy."

George blushed, hiding his face in his knees as his chest ached, "He is..."

Meanwhile a little earlier....

Dream struggled, panicking so strongly that he wasn't even registering the splitting pain from his shoulder wound as he tried unsuccessfully to push the pillagers holding his arms away. All he could think about were his friends who had been separated from him. Who knows where they're taking them?

"Let me go!" Dream growled and he even tried headbutting one of the pillagers, but the pillager moved out of the way, glaring darkly at Dream, "You'll all regret this! You have *no* idea what's going to come for you."

He muttered that last one as darkly as he could as if his rage could have a physical manifestation. The pillagers continued to ignore his threats as they pulled him down a hallway of iron cells. Dream was too busy struggling to notice the effect his fury was having on some of the other prisoners.

"Hey!" Dream growled as he was shoved as hard as he could onto the ground. He jumped up and almost made it back to the pillagers but they were quicker and slammed the iron railing doors in

his face, "We aren't through here! Where are my friends!? Where's *George*?!"

The pillagers simply walked away and Dream thrust his fists against the iron in anger. Despair, self-loathing, and rage was all he could feel. He jumped around when he felt someone touch him.

The guy backed up immediately, his expression wary, "Hey, hey, calm down! You aren't helping yourself here!"

Dream was breathing heavily and he was briefly stunned to finally realize there were other prisoners around. He looked around, there seemed to be two to a cell. He turned to the guy standing in the cell with him.

The man was dark-skinned and had raven-black hair. He also had dark brown eyes and was wearing all iron armor except his chest plate was diamond, much to Dream's shock. The pillagers let him keep that on? Dream looked down at his own armor, stunned in his confusion.

"I know it's a lot to process," The man by his side said with a slight lisp to his voice, "Just please don't make a scene anymore."

Dream flicked his eyes to him in a glare, "Who the hell are you? Why do we still have our armor? Why?"

The guy held up his hands, his expression morphing into annoyance, "Jeez, hold on! We have a lot of time so don't just fire off questions like that. Just calm down and I'll explain stuff."

Dream realized he was taking his hostility out on someone who didn't deserve it and took a deep breath. He put a hand on his chest, feeling his heart almost beating out of it. He couldn't reign in his panic. Where was George and Bad? What was happening to them?

"Okay, he seems calmer, thank God," A new voice piped up, sounding half annoyed and half amused. Dream whipped his head to look at the cell across from them. Two men occupied the cell; one was leaning against the wall studying him intently while the other was sitting cross-legged on the floor looking tired, "You aren't gonna start yelling at us are you?"

"No..." Dream trailed off, staring at them before looking at his cellmate.

"Great! I understand you're freaking out. I heard you mention your friends..." His cellmate paused hesitantly, a look of sorrow crossing his face for a split second, "They should be okay. They're just in different cell areas..."

Dream didn't get to reply before the guy sitting cross-legged added quickly, "And they separated you guys so that they could punish them if you act out and vice versa. It's crazy annoying really."

"And here I thought they were just mindless brutes," Dream groaned, his knees almost giving out. He had to sit heavily on the floor as his heart thudded in his chest. So his friends were safe, technically speaking, until he acted out?

"What's your name newbie?" The cross-legged man asked, staring at him like he was sizing up his potential. Dream blinked at him.

"I'm Dream," He introduced blankly, fidgeting with his fingers as he tried to stop his mind racing.

"Interesting name. I'm Fundy," The cross-legged guy grinned and Dream glanced at him. Fundy had brownish-red hair and brown eyes. He seemed around the same age as Dream but he couldn't be sure.

Dream glanced at the guy leaning on the wall. He was still staring at Dream almost curiously, as if he knew something about him. Dream wasn't sure what to make of it, "What are you staring at?"

The guy startled out of whatever daze he was in and realized he'd been staring. He smiled sheepishly, "Oh sorry. I was the newest person here and I was just curious about you. There's something about you...like I've met or heard about you before."

Dream rose an eyebrow, lost, "I don't think you have. What's your name?"

"Oh, sorry, my name's Wilbur," The man shrugged. Dream noted his side-swept curly mahogany hair and dark brown eyes.

"Nope, haven't heard of you before," Dream shook his head and Wilbur hummed, tilting his head, "Wait, you said you were the newest person here before me?"

"Yeah I got caught about two weeks ago," Wilbur sighed, looking at the ground in disappointment. Fundy and Dream's cellmate snickered for some reason, "Wasn't careful enough."

Dream's breath hitched as his mind immediately went to George. He doubled over, feeling a hot surge of panic. George was right about everything he said since entering the nether. Dream remembers the hurt he felt when George basically called him a mindless barbarian. Dream squeezed his eyes closed as he struggled to breath.

"Holy shit, dude, stay with us!" Dream's cellmate was near-yelling and he didn't even realize his cellmate had his hand on his back like he was steadying him. Dream's hearing went fuzzy with white noise for a second before it eventually cleared, "That's it. I know it's rough, dude, but just breath in as much as you can with your nose and breath out with your mouth. That's great!"

His cellmate continued to coach him until Dream felt the hotness cool down and he felt his fingers trembling. He recognized the signs of a panic attack and felt ashamed that these strangers had to witness that.

But when Dream glanced at them, he didn't see pity. Fundy was looking at him with a soft understanding. Wilbur's eyes looked dark and he was frowning, eyeing the end of the hallway like he was pissed. Dream finally glanced at his cellmate to see nothing but concern and determination.

"You good now?" His cellmate murmured and Dream nodded, swallowing around the lump in his throat. He desperately wished he had his mask so they couldn't see his expressions, "Don't feel bad...we've all been there, dude. Especially *me*."

Dream quirked an eyebrow at him but his cellmate was frowning at the ground sadly and Dream's expression immediately dropped. His cellmate wasn't kidding, "T-Thanks...uh, what's your name by the way?"

His cellmate jumped, blinking in surprise before he laughed nervously, "Oh, right, I didn't even....sorry about that! I'm Skeppy."

Dream felt a physical jolt akin to one you'd feel when you fall in your dreams and startle yourself awake. His voice climbed into the highest pitch possible as he strangled out a shout, "*WHAT?!*"

Wilbur, Fundy, and Skeppy all jumped, their eyes widened at him. Dream inhaled sharply, his mind racing, "You're Skeppy?!"

Skeppy nodded hesitantly, looking at him as if he were looking at a madman and Dream let out a few chuckles of disbelief, which didn't help. Skeppy took a step back and Wilbur rose an eyebrow, "Lost your mind already, have you?"

"I can't *believe* this," Dream said, ignoring Wilbur and placing a hand to his forehead as he laughed again. He almost felt like he couldn't stop, "Oh my God....!"

"Why is it so funny that I'm me?" Skeppy asked incredulously, still keeping his distance.

"Because I *know* you," Dream stressed, before blinking, "At least, a little....I...listen, long story short...I was with my two friends and we've been traveling, following any leads to find our friends. Wait no, I'm butchering this..."

They looked at him in interest and Dream was struggling with how to word this. That's why he blurted unintelligently, "I've been traveling with Bad!"

Fundy gasped, Wilbur looked confused, and Skeppy froze, his eyes widening like Dream had just

told him he had a bomb strapped to him. A myriad of emotions flashed through his eyes ranging from shock, hope, and disbelief. He eventually choked out, "*What?*"

"I met Bad as I was following a lead to find these pillagers," Dream explained, "He was looking for them too so that he could find you."

"Are you...are you serious?" Skeppy asked, choking on his words. His eyes locked onto Dream's and Dream was struggling to stay serious looking to convince him. Skeppy laughed once, hope entering his eyes before realization set in, "Oh my God, wait, he's *here*?!"

Dream flinched, "Uh, yeah...he and my friend George were separated from me once we got here. They took him down the right hall..."

Skeppy's eyes filled with tears and his expression was wild with horror, "Oh my God, oh my *God*, he's here...I never wanted him to be *here*..."

"Skeppy, relax," Fundy spoke up and Dream startled, almost forgetting about the other two, "It'll be alright. We can figure everything out. It won't help if you're panicking, right?"

Skeppy was forcing himself to breath and he nodded, looking gratefully at Fundy, "Yes....yes, okay....you're right. Thanks Fundy."

Fundy glanced at Dream, his expression hard to tell, "I can't believe you and Bad came here looking for your friends. You got some serious guts man."

Dream laughed once before a startling thought occurred to him. His eyes widened and he shot up immediately. The others jumped slightly and he turned to Skeppy, his eyes almost wild and his voice cracking, "Wait...is he...is *he* here too? My friend he-"

"Okay don't work yourself in another panic attack," Fundy soothed, still looking startled as he also stood and held his hands up, "What's your friend's name?"

"S-Sapnap," His friend's name fell off his tongue heavily, almost as if he couldn't bring himself to say it. Skeppy and Fundy froze before looking at Dream in shock.

Then Fundy grinned and Dream felt the wind rush out of his lungs, "Oh yeah...that tough bastard is here."

Dream's legs gave out on him and he fell to the ground with a harsh thud. He shoved his hands into his face immediately because he felt his eyes quickly forming tears of strangled relief and happiness. Sapnap was alive. He really was alive! He's here! He's in the same building as Dream!

Dream bit his lip hard enough to draw blood when he felt a sob building. He didn't want to shame himself more than he already had in front of these guys, no matter how much they might understand. Skeppy didn't seem to have the same reservations because he heard him crying softly.

"Wow, what a day," Wilbur suddenly said, sounding like he'd just watched a theater play, "I don't know much about you guys yet but good on you. I'm *happy* for you."

Dream breathed in deep and wiped his face to get rid of the tears that managed to escape before he glanced at Wilbur. Skeppy managed a small strangled laugh, "Thanks man.....I can't believe this..."

"I know right?" Fundy snorted, crossing his arms, "First we get this guy and his talks of breaking out and armies then we get *this* tall dude dropping these bombs on us..."

Dream paused, tilting his head as he looked intrigued, "You guys have talked about breaking out of here?"

Suddenly they looked wary and glanced down the hall, making Dream do the same. There were no pillagers in sight. Fundy sighed, "Don't say it so loud but....yeah a little. It's mainly been this guy."

"Well I understand it's harder for you guys to consider it, since you've been here awhile, but I'm not planning to stay here," Wilbur muttered with a dark look in his eyes.

"Me either," Dream frowned, his hands curling into fists, "Especially since I know Sapnap's here now."

"Yeah, he's in the left hall of cells so he's probably with that other friend of yours," Skeppy told him and Dream's eyes widened. That would mean George would meet Sapnap. His heart warmed at the idea, even if the circumstances were horrible. He also felt a little relieved. He wasn't sure how much Sapnap has changed, but he figured George would be safe with Sapnap.

Dream let out a shaky sigh, putting a hand on his chest, which felt tight like he'd pulled a muscle there, "This is crazy..."

"You're telling me," Skeppy sighed as well, looking at the ground hazily, "Is Bad....has he been okay?"

For once, Dream actually smiled as he thought about Bad, "Yeah, he's okay....he's unusually cheerful and optimistic."

Skeppy laughed, his face brightening slightly, "Wilbur...I take back what I said the other day. I don't care what we have to do. We're getting the *hell* out of here."

"Skeppy!" Fundy gasped, looking stunned. Wilbur appeared taken off guard as well and Dream was left wondering why.

"We'll figure it out, Fundy. I don't care how long it takes," Skeppy growled out, "We'll make sure we have a plan so great that they won't be able to threaten the others."

Dream's eyes widened as he suddenly understood, "Right...you said when we act out they threaten to hurt our friends."

"No, not threaten," Fundy frowned, his eyes dark, "They're always *threatening* us but if we actually act out, they punish our friends for it. It's....."

He trailed off and Dream felt like he understood, his own face darkening in rage. How could these people do this to them or to any other person in general?

Wilbur looked at them contemplatively, "We can take it slow....plan it out stage by stage....if we can we need to mention it to the others when we go out."

"Go out?" Dream asked in confusion. Skeppy jumped.

"Oh right! Sorry, I'll explain," Skeppy smiled sheepishly, "So the pillagers make us work for them. Sometimes it's just odd jobs like building things for them but most of the time its fighting nether creatures."

"Seriously?" Dream said, his eyebrows furrowing in disbelief. He was beginning to believe the rumors about the pillagers were true.

"Yes. Everyday they choose two people from each of the three halls of cells and take them out to kill nether creatures. Mainly it's Endermen they want us to kill," Fundy explained and then he sighed, "We know they put priority on ender pearls but it's such a rare drop and the Endermen are deadly."

"How do they stop you guys from acting out if you're grouped up like that?" Dream asked curiously.

"Other than having the threat of our friends' punishment over our heads?" Fundy snorted, "They always monitor us in a big group when we're forced to go out. They have this red stone device that rings an alarm back here that lets the pillagers here know to begin punishments."

"Damn..." Dream tsked and then he frowned.

Things went quiet for a second. Dream felt mentally and emotionally drained. He glanced down the hall towards the stairs and felt his heart clench in his chest. He really hoped George and Bad were okay. If they experienced the same shock as him at meeting the other prisoners then he was sure they were probably feeling just as drained as him...

Dream flinched when the sound of someone sobbing echoed through the halls. His heart skipped a beat and he almost jumped when Fundy and Skeppy leapt to their feet with wide eyes. Dream immediately stood as well when two pillagers appeared down the stairs. They were hauling a short man who was sobbing into the cell near the stairs before leaving.

"Oh..." Skeppy said in tone mixed with sadness and anger, "He was one of the two that were taken out of here earlier, before you arrived."

"I see..." Dream trailed off, not taking his eyes off the man sobbing uncontrollably on the floor. He didn't think about it before, but the pillagers took many of the young people when they raided a village and Dream was sure most of them didn't know enough about fighting to take on nether creatures. Dream's hands balled into fists, "Then...I guess that means the person that was taken with him didn't make it?"

"No..." Skeppy whispered and then he sighed, sitting back on the floor, "And that happens a lot here, obviously."

Dream glanced over at Wilbur, who appeared stone-faced as he also watched the man sob on the floor. Fundy was sitting again and glaring at his knees. It was infuriating how much control the pillagers had here but Dream couldn't imagine what Fundy and Skeppy were feeling as they've been here for a long time. And Sapnap.....Dream's eyes widened as he imagined Sapnap, George, or Bad out there being forced to fight nether creatures for these cowards.

"There's no way in hell," Dream growled out loud, startling the others.

"Dream?" Wilbur asked warily, tilting his head. Dream looked at him seriously.

"We're definitely gonna escape from here. I don't care what we have to do either," Dream muttered darkly as their eyes widened, "I'm *not* letting my friends die in this place. So I'm gonna need your help."

Wilbur smirked, Fundy laughed once, and Skeppy brightened considerably.

George waited impatiently for Sapnap to return. He felt like he was going to explode with the news he wanted to tell the other male as soon as he returned. He'd only managed to distract himself by questioning Karl and vice versa. Karl was exceptionally talkative when he didn't seem to be in a slump.

So far they exchanged a little information such as their age and things they liked. Karl avoided talking about where he came from and George understood that so much. And then they talked about Dream and Bad.

"This is so crazy...I can't-Bad's here too..." Karl trailed off, his eyes glazing over. When George first told Karl about Bad, he was stunned that Karl knew who he was talking about. Soon he realized it was because Skeppy was somewhere captive here and must talk about him. George felt ecstatic that his friend's loved ones were here, even if 'here' was some horrible place. They were alive and for now that's all that mattered to George.

"I know what you mean...I've heard so much about Sapnap and Skeppy," George started and he licked his lips, "So hearing that they're actually *here*...it almost doesn't feel real."

Karl stared at him, "Your buddy Dream was taken down the center hall right?"

"Yup."

"Then he's with Skeppy," Karl said with a beam and George's eyes widened, "Those of us that have been here for awhile...we know which hall the others are in. They don't tend to move us to different cells unless they think they absolutely *have* to."

"Makes sense," George frowned, "Bad was taken down the right hall of cells....who is in there?"

"The ones that have been here longest in those cells are Antfrost, Ranboo, and Nihachu. We call her Nikki by the way!" Karl supplied cheerfully and George rose an eyebrow, surprised. He didn't see many women in the cells and it must have been because they all tragically....

Karl glanced at him when he noted his silence and must have known what he was thinking because his smile turned bitter, "Whenever there's a girl in our group we do our best to protect them *but*...."

George nodded, his throat clogging up with thickness. How horrible. They both flinched when they heard noise down the hall. It distantly sounded like sobbing. George's heart leapt into his throat as Sapnap and Quackity appeared in view of the stairs with three pillagers behind them. Both of them look devastated and George was left wondering what in the hell happened while they were 'out'.

As they drew closer, George tried to catch Sapnap's eye but he froze when he saw how pissed Sapnap looked. His eyes were wide and wild with barely concealed rage while his teeth were clenched so tightly George wondered if he cracked a tooth yet. George shot the pillagers a filthy look when they pushed Sapnap in the cell before doing the same to Quackity in his own cell, locking it again and leaving.

"Quackity! Are you okay?!" Karl fretted as his hands hovered near the man, who nodded. Quackity looked more devastated in the sad sense where Sapnap was enraged. Karl's voice quieted down, "What happened?"

"We lost someone," Quackity replied just as quietly and George jumped out of his skin when Sapnap suddenly punched a wall, letting out an angry wail, "Sapnap...."

"I was *so* close to him!" Sapnap growled out as his hands shook, "He was right *there*! But that Endermen just...."

George swallowed, desperately trying not to picture someone being torn apart effortlessly by a deadly Endermen. Karl frowned sadly, "Sap...it sounds like you did everything you could."

Sapnap's lips tightened as he turned and slid down the wall. He sighed, his voice muffled by his sleeves, "Wasn't *enough*."

"Did you get any pearls...?" George asked hesitantly and then wanted to slap himself for sounding like he didn't care what Sapnap and Quackity just went through. They both looked at him but they didn't look angry.

"No..." Quackity shook his head, "We only managed to kill two Endermen but the third one...."

George nodded his head in grim understanding, "Sorry...."

"Did Karl fill you in on how things are done here?" Sapnap asked, changing the subject. George was thankful but now he wasn't sure how to approach the subject of Dream to Sapnap.

"Y-Yeah...I understand a little better now. He also told me about the other prisoners..." George trailed off and Sapnap seemed a little surprised by that but he didn't comment on it, "Actually, I have something to tell you...but I'm sure you'll freak out and I'm not sure how to do it."

Sapnap blinked at him but didn't look wary at all. Instead he looked morbidly curious, "Uh, okay? Just take it step by step then."

George felt kind of relieved as he nodded, "Okay, well...so a couple of months ago I saved this guy outside my village. He was hurt so I fixed him up and he also saved me so I decided to travel with him."

"Okay...?" Sapnap tilted his head, raising an eyebrow. George glanced at Karl and Quackity. Both of them were also staring at him curiously. George realized he hadn't really told Karl this much either.

"He told me he was traveling looking for the pillagers with the spiky crescent-shaped tattoos..." George explained before biting his lip. He didn't want to just outright say it and shock Sapnap, but he felt like he was explaining this awkwardly.

"You're talking about the two friends you got captured with, right?" Sapnap asked for clarification and George nodded.

"Yeah, I mean, we met the other one on the way because my friend heard he was also looking for this group. Both of my friends are looking for these pillagers because their friends were captured," George said in a rush. Sapnap blinked.

Sapnap's face scrunched up in confusion and sympathy, "They were captured? What are their friends' names? Maybe we know them."

George looked almost helplessly at Karl, he was panicking. Karl just smiled at him and jerked his head towards Sapnap in a nod. George nodded and sighed deeply before he looked seriously at Sapnap, "I've been traveling with Badboyhalo and Dream trying to find you and Skeppy."

Quackity inhaled sharply, his eyes going wide like he was just punched in the stomach. Sapnap's eyes also went wide, his tan skin paling. George fidgeted under his intense staring until he realized that Sapnap wasn't actually focused on *him*. George supposed he was in shock, "S-Sapnap?"

"Give him a minute," Karl spoke up and George looked at him anxiously. Karl just smiled again. George looked back at Sapnap hesitantly and it was a moment longer before Sapnap's mouth seemed to catch up with his brain, "How do- *what*...?"

"I met Dream a couple of months ago and decided to help him look for you," George reiterated slowly, "He's been looking for you the whole time these past five years."

To George's shock, Sapnap's mouth fell open and tears filled his eyes so quickly it didn't seem real. Sapnap clamped his mouth shut like he was holding back a sob but he couldn't prevent the tears leaking from his eyes. George felt his heart go out to him because Sapnap looked like he was struggling to accept what he was hearing, "But *how*- he was....there was *so* much blood, there's no way he- didn't even *move*..."

Sapnap was speaking brokenly and George frowned sadly, moving closer to the other male. George lifted a shaky hand and hesitantly placed it on Sapnap's shoulder. He jumped when Sapnap's face

shot up and he focused his teary eyes on George's face, "You better not be lying to me...he's *actually*..."

"Dream's alive," George promised, hoping his expression looked serious enough. George gasped when Sapnap doubled over on him, ending with Sapnap's wet face in George's shoulder. He let Sapnap sit there and cling for a few moments before speaking up again, "He's in the center hall..."

Sapnap sniffed, "Th-That means he's with Skeppy and Fundy for sure..."

"This is great Sapnap!" Karl suddenly cheered, his loud voice startling many of them. Quackity laughed but it almost sounded strangled.

"Bad and Dream actually being here? That's almost a dream come true!" Quackity laughed out, "Pun intended."

George chuckled and Sapnap sniffled again before leaning back and wiping his face harshly. George smiled at him when Sapnap looked at him sheepishly, "Sorry I turned into a complete wuss there for a second. I..."

"I don't think that makes you a wuss," George denied genuinely, "You just found out your best friend is alive after all these years. By the way, Dream never once thought you were dead."

Sapnap's eyes widened in surprise before his look softened, "He's such a cocky dumbass..."

"Yeah he is," George nodded and Sapnap looked surprise again before laughing, "I'm sure he's probably doing something stupid in his cell right now."

"Poor Skeppy!" Karl laughed and Quackity shook his head with a huge grin.

"I still can't believe this..." Sapnap sighed, his smile dying down, "Dream's actually alive and you're telling me he's *here*..."

"He is," George grinned as he grabbed Sapnap's hand and squeezed it soothingly, "And now that I know you're here, I'm gonna stop at *nothing* to make sure you guys can be together again!"

Sapnap looked at him with huge eyes before he shocked George by throwing his head back and laughing loudly, "*Ahahaha!* You make us sound like long-lost lovers!"

Karl and Quackity were apparently dying of laughter too and George couldn't be bothered to feel embarrassed about his awkwardness when he finally made them laugh like this.

"You said Bad's a *what* now?" Skeppy asked incredulously, his voice pitching higher for a moment in hysterical amusement.

"He's a traveling librarian," Dream smirked and Skeppy wailed into laughter, "I'm *serious*! You should see how many books he has in his pack!"

"I can't say I've heard of a traveling librarian," Fundy chuckled as he watched Skeppy cry from laughter. Even Wilbur was chuckling.

"You think *that's* funny then you should have seen how George reacted when he learned Bad's name," Dream laughed out, "Bad was all like, 'I'm Badboyhalo!' Even *I* was shocked but George looked stupefied!"

"Stop! I'm gonna pee myself!" Skeppy cried and Dream laughed a little louder, near wheezing.

Fundy looked at him disbelief and that only made Dream want to laugh more. After the seriousness from earlier, Dream and Skeppy had been exchanging short stories. Fundy sometimes chimed in.

"Wait," Wilbur suddenly said, his voice going deep with seriousness. Skeppy and Dream's laughter died down as they all looked at him in confusion, "You just said *Badboyhalo*?"

"Yeah?" Dream cocked his head in confusion at Wilbur, who's eyes subtly widened, "Why? Do you know Bad?"

"No, not personally. But I know someone who knows him," Wilbur explained and Skeppy straightened, "I didn't put two and two together before. You know Technoblade, right Dream?"

Dream sucked in a breath, "Yeah! He's the one that gave us this lead to the nether in the first place!"

Wilbur smiled and nodded, "Techno is the one that sent me out to investigate the rumor of people trapped in the nether."

"Oh!" Dream gasped. He remembered, distantly, about when they met Technoblade and how he said he was sending someone he trusted to look into the rumor. Dream couldn't believe he was staring at the guy though, "Techno *did* tell us he was sending someone he trusted to look into things."

"Who is Techno?" Fundy asked with a brow raised as both he and Skeppy stared almost impatiently at the two.

Dream looked at Wilbur for an explanation as well, because he figured it'd be better for someone who actually knew more things about Techno to explain. Wilbur caught Dream's eye and seemed to make a decision about something, "Well, Technoblade is kind of the leader of a large prosperous village. It's one of the biggest villages in recorded history because it's been built up on over the years."

"What do you mean he's *kind* of the leader?" Dream questioned at once, remembering what Techno wore and how he held himself.

"Techno doesn't really like being a leader, he's more of a warrior," Wilbur explained with a fond smirk, "It's the villagers that appointed him the leader. The actual 'King' of the village is someone else in name."

"And he doesn't mind that the villagers want Techno as leader instead of him?" Skeppy asked with an incredulous expression.

Wilbur shrugged, "No, the actual leader's a nice, chill guy. Anyways, Techno is going to absolutely lose his shit when my letters stop coming in."

Dream snorted, "I'll bet but, I'm curious....you seem to know him pretty well. Are you close?"

"I would hope so," Wilbur barked out a laugh and his eyes shone in amusement, "We're adopted brothers."

"What?!" Dream gasped, stunned. He wasn't expecting *that* exactly.

"Whoa," Fundy laughed out, "So you'll have someone big looking for you soon, huh?"

"Yeah," Wilbur nodded, still amused, "Once Techno works out that I might have been captured,

he'll be organizing a group to the nether with himself as leader, knowing him."

"Wait, really?" Skeppy asked with a stunned expression, "If he's a bigshot and he comes *here*....that could help us with an escape plan a lot..."

"I just don't know when or what to expect," Wilbur said with more seriousness in his voice, "I just know that he'll raise hell when he finds out I'm captured in the nether."

"Let's hope he brings a lot of people," Dream said as he felt a distant excitement building. If Techno brings a group, Dream knows it'll be a group that knows what they're doing and they'll actually have a decent shot of getting out of here without losing anyone.

"Got anymore of those big-shot brothers, Wilbur?" Fundy joked, laughing a bit. Wilbur rolled his eyes.

"I wouldn't call him a big-shot or his ego will explode, but I do have another adopted brother. His name is Tommy but he's just a kid...younger than me and Techno," Wilbur trailed off as his eyes glazed over. Dream recognized that Wilbur was becoming a little sad, "But he's actually pretty crazy so he'll also freak out when he learns I'm captured. And don't even get me *started* on our dad."

"Your dad?" Skeppy parroted, "Is he just as crazy as your brothers then?"

A glint entered Wilbur's eyes, "No, he's a lot worse where *we're* concerned. I wouldn't be surprised if he ends up killing half the pillagers here after Techno."

Dream shivered for some reason and felt more excitement building. Dream was suddenly reminded of his argument with George. How he was always mindlessly going into battle. Dream knew he liked fighting and he liked the adrenaline, not to mention the feeling of a challenge but he was determined to be smart about any escape plan and approach things from every side this time.

Dream wasn't going to let himself be as overly confident in himself as he was last time; not when he had people to lose if he failed this time.

Chapter End Notes

Phew! I hope I pegged Dream, Sapnap, and Skeppy's reactions realistically. Poor Sapnap though...there's still so much more to learn about him...Wilbur as well! More will be explored next chapter!!

Anyways, there were a lot of new names thrown around and I hope you didn't get confused. Let me know in the comments if you are and I'll do my best to address it!

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

George gets selected to fight for the pillagers and meets the mysterious Ranboo. Dream and the others get to know Wilbur more.

Chapter Notes

Hi guys! I was having a lot of trouble this week but I was still excited to get this update out! I hope to God it's not messy, haha!

Thanks so much for all the support! This story officially hit 90 bookmarks, how crazy!

ALSO IMPORTANT NOTE: I wrote Ranboo's character in before I really watched any of the streams for his character arch in the Dream SMP. So in other words, I AM NOT strictly following the SMP version of his character!! I hope you Ranboo fans won't be too disappointed with how I am writing him. I LOVE Ranboo's character, ughh!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

That first night in the cells weren't as bad as George was expecting and that was due entirely to the three prisoners George now began to see as his new friends. It was impossible to think otherwise with how the four of them got along together, despite just meeting each other. George wondered what it would have been like if they had all grown up together.

They talked together, laughed together, and somewhat avoided talking about anything that would upset the cheerful atmosphere they were trying to create. George understood, especially after what happened when Sapnap and Quackity went out. He was already told it was a common occurrence and to people that actually value human life, George couldn't imagine how they've handled it this long.

So George avoided talking about the pillagers for now and just enjoyed the rest of the night talking about silly stories and personal likes or dislikes with the others. Eventually they got so tired they fell asleep but George and Quackity were the last ones to succumb to slumber.

George was surprised when Sapnap fell asleep curled up close to him, a hand partially on George's like he fell asleep making sure George was still there. It made him incredibly sad somehow. George caught Quackity staring at them with an empathic frown and had quietly told George, "He hasn't had a cellmate in little over a year....and I think they did that on purpose."

Instant rage was building in his chest at Quackity's words. George was almost surprised by how angered he was so suddenly. He didn't know what to do with those feelings so instead he pushed it to the back of his brain, bid Quackity a good night, and laid down right beside Sapnap before falling into his own restless slumber.

The next morning, Sapnap woke up before George. When George finally zoned in on the quiet mumbling and opened his eyes, George noticed that Sapnap was sitting right beside him, as if he had woken up and decided not to move. That's when George noticed that he was holding Sapnap's wrist. He gasped lightly and immediately removed his hand, "Sorry...."

"Don't be!" Sapnap laughed a little, "Good morning, by the way!"

"Yeah, good morning!" Karl added in a chirpy voice. Quackity simply waved, smirking over at George.

George immediately relaxed and smiled back at them until he noticed they were holding bowls in their hands, "What's that?"

"Breakfast," Sapnap answered, his tone dropping into seriousness, "They delivered it, like, just five minutes ago. I have yours here. We also have water."

"I guess that makes sense. Need to keep us strong enough to fight for them," George quipped, his anger from last night returning. The other three said nothing but their looks portrayed their sentiment to what he said. Sapnap handed him a bowl from his other side as well as a water bottle. George blinked, unsure what he thought he was going to see but definitely not expecting it to be a bowl of plain white rice.

"It's actually not that bad but one *does* get tired of rice," Quackity joked and George couldn't muster a smile if he tried. Thinking about them eating this same bland meal each day for years made his chest ache. Sapnap must have understood him, he seemed to be able to understand him naturally, because he gave a small sympathetic smile.

"Eat up, dude," Sapnap told him, "You'll definitely need it. You're like a twig."

"Excuse me?" George glared over at him and Sapnap laughed around the rice in his mouth making George wince in disgust. Karl and Quackity laughed at the sight. George rolled his eyes and ate in silence, not dignifying that comment with a response. He wasn't twig-like for real, was he? George briefly glanced at his thin arms and almost winced again.

Sapnap finished eating before any of them and set his bowl aside before turning to face George more. George rose an eyebrow at the set look of curiosity in his gaze, "Hey, can I ask you some things?"

"Sure," George nodded, already sure what he was going to ask about. He tried not to smile to

himself.

"So, like, you said you met Dream near your village and you helped him?" Sapnap asked and George nodded immediately. Karl and Quackity went quiet as they turned their heads to stare at the pair. The curiosity grew in Sapnap's eyes, "How did you help him? Why did he need help?"

"Oh he....he was attacked by a random group of pillagers," George explained slowly, trying to remember every detail, "He was following a lead when it happened. He got a pretty nasty cut in his side that got infected and I found him near my village. So I fixed him up."

"I see..." Sapnap grinned, "So even Dream can lose a fight...he's always so cocky about winning..."

George shrugged, feeling his chest ache as he responded quietly, "Any strong person can be overwhelmed by a group..."

Something in George's tone made Sapnap's eyes widen and he quickly changed the subject, "So...why did you decide to start traveling with him?"

"I....well its-" George cut himself off to gather himself again and Sapnap rose an eyebrow.

"George? You okay? You're paling..." Karl trailed off, looking concerned. George swallowed heavily.

"Yeah, sorry...well at first I didn't really *agree* to leave my village with Dream. It just sort of...happened?" George explained and all three of them looked confused. George sighed, "Um, so the villagers in my village didn't really accept or like me...and one of them saw me help Dream apparently and they didn't really like that...."

"Oh...." Quackity winced, "So they got mad at you?"

George nodded hesitantly, "They demanded I leave the village for 'endangering' them as they put it. They threw me to the ground and one of them even threw a rock at my head. Then Dream helped me escape..."

When he glanced up, George was surprised to see the angry look on Sapnap's face and his heart skipped a beat before he realized Sapnap was probably angry for his sake, "Wow, you had it pretty rough huh?"

Something about that made him feel guilty. Rough? Well he'd pretty much been shunned and ignored most of his life but compared to everything *they've* been through, it didn't feel right to call it rough. George shrugged, "I was glad Dream got me out. After that he told me he was traveling to find *you* and I decided to help him because he helped me."

"I see now," Sapnap hummed as he glanced at George, "And how long ago did that happen?"

"About a couple of months ago I believe," George replied, meeting Sapnap's gaze, "We met Bad a couple weeks after meeting each other."

Sapnap made a noncommittal noise as his eyes glazed over in thought. George cocked his head as he watched him. It was clear Sapnap's questions about Dream weren't ending soon, but George was prepared for that.

"What's Dream like...?" Sapnap asked suddenly and George blinked over at him, confused. Shouldn't he know what Dream's like? "I mean...I guess I'm just curious how much he's changed."

"Oh," George's eyes widened as he understood. He looked up, thinking deeply, "Well I don't know what he used to be like, of course, but he's very wary and easily suspicious of people he doesn't know anything about."

"He's always kinda been that way," Sapnap nodded, his lips quirking into a small smile.

"He's really good with weapons, particularly with swords, axes, and even hand to hand combat. He'd been teaching me recently," George confessed and Sapnap laughed, a bright look on his face.

"He always wasn't that bad before but I bet he's gotten all *badass* now," Sapnap grinned and George smiled at how happy Sapnap looked hearing about Dream.

"He likes making dumb jokes and teasing people," George sighed and he heard Karl laugh really loud across the room. George grinned, "Also, for some reason, he doesn't view himself as kind but he really *is* once he gets past the wariness. He's also pretty protective."

Sapnap's grin widened at that as he leaned closer, "Is he super protective of you then?"

George's eyes widened and he stammered, "U-Uh...kinda? He's like that with *all* his friends though."

For whatever reason, Sapnap's smile fell an inch and he considered George very seriously suddenly, as if George said something that gave away a secret. Quackity spoke up, distracting him, "Sounds like you and Dream are pretty close."

"And Bad..." George added, a funny feeling in his stomach. He was reminded of his conversation with Bad and blushed a little. He noticed a weird look in Sapnap's eyes and felt his heart drop into his stomach as a sudden thought hit him, "Um, we *are* pretty close. We're best friends but, uh, he still values you the most Sapnap."

"Huh?" Sapnap said, his eyes going large.

"I don't want you to think that...uh..." George trailed off, suddenly feeling awkward.

"Oh my God!" Karl laughed loudly again and George jumped, looking over at him in confusion, "He thinks you're gonna be mad thinking George replaced you."

"Ohh-*ho* my God!" Sapnap gasped before laughing just as hard, Quackity soon joined in. George turned red in embarrassment, not understanding why that was so funny, "No, George, I'm not....it's not....I was close to Dream and it's not like that means he can't be close to others. I don't feel upset about that or anything!"

George felt mild relief but he still felt embarrassed, "Then why did you have that weird look on your face when we talked about being close?"

Sapnap smirked, "Oh, I was just curious about your reactions that's all...you got kinda defensive when I asked if he was super protective of you..."

"Well that's..." George stopped speaking, staring at the ground. He felt unsure what to say. He didn't really want to talk about his conversation with Bad. This didn't feel like the time or the place.

Sapnap, as usual, must have noticed it was something he didn't want to talk about because he changed the subject again. He whined, "Ugh, I just want to *see* him already! I hope he gets put in a group with me soon!"

George smiled a little, "He'll definitely be more excited to see *you*."

"He might even cry," Karl teased and George laughed because he couldn't imagine that but at the same time he *could*. Sapnap chuckled.

"Dream doesn't cry easily so that'd be a sight to see," Sapnap sighed wistfully, "It's not like I don't believe you, George, but I just want to see him alive in the flesh with my own eyes."

"I get it," George said gently.

The sound of multiple footsteps froze all conversation and George flinched when Sapnap quickly jumped to his feet with practiced ease. Karl and Quackity were also standing, blank looks on their faces, so George decided to stand as well. He stood off to the side, behind Sapnap.

The pillagers stopped at the third cage from the staircase, "You...come along."

The man chosen looked defeated already and offered no resistance as he walked out of his cage. His cellmate wasn't even looking at him. George felt his heart go out to them until the pillagers came to a stop right at the cage he shared with Sapnap.

They pointed at George, "And you....come out."

"What?! It's his *first* morning here!" Sapnap yelled, his eyes widening. Karl sucked in a breath and George felt his heart stutter in his chest.

"Come out. Don't make us ask again," The pillagers ignored Sapnap save for one that sneered at him. Sapnap snarled back. George stood frozen to the spot. He was going to be forced out into the nether again? He barely felt like he could survive it the *first* time and he had been with Dream and Bad then!

"One last warning. Come out *now*. Don't make us go punish the masked man," One of the pillagers said and George stopped moving. He glanced up wildly.

"Fine! I swear to *God*..." George trailed off, anger bleeding into his tone. He was completely unprepared for them to suddenly and directly threaten Dream, even if he technically wasn't masked anymore; they still knew to refer to him as such so George knew who they were talking about. He was briefly confused why it was *just* Dream they were threatening him with and not also Bad.

George clenched his fists and ground his teeth together to keep from saying something stupid as he walked towards the cell doors.

"*Wait!*" Sapnap grabbed his arm tightly and spun him around so that George faced him. Sapnap looked absolutely panicked, "You remember the names of the other prisoners, right? The ones that have been here for awhile?"

"Yeah..." George nodded, glancing uneasily as the pillagers bristled with rage.

"Good. Stick with them. They know what to do," Sapnap urged and George almost winced with how hard Sapnap squeezed his arm then, "Make sure you come back."

George knew better than to actually promise that so he nodded but couldn't muster any confident smile. He nodded briefly to a distraught looking Karl and Quackity before he was almost dragged out of his cell and pushed alongside the random prisoner to the staircase.

Once he and the other random prisoner were pushed up the flight of stairs, they were forced to go up to the platform where George remembered the pillagers stopping to discuss when he was captured. As they came into view of the platform, George blinked when he saw four other people. Then he realized they were other prisoners from the other two hall of cells.

Immediately two of the prisoners' eyes were on him curiously and George knew it was because he was a newcomer and they didn't recognize him. Two of the other prisoners joined the random one that had been forced to come from George's hall of cells.

He wasn't sure what to do as the pillagers shuffled into action around them. He counted at least fifteen so Karl hadn't been joking when he explained how tightly monitored the prisoners were even when they were forced to go out in groups. George jumped when two of the prisoners slid closer to him.

One of them looked relatively normal while the other....*did not*. The normal one had dark skin, black hair, and dark brown eyes while the not so normal one looked like something George had never seen before. The man was freakishly tall, taller than anyone here including *Dream*. Half his body seemed to be as pale as a ghost while the other half was light black. His hair matched his body as one half was as dark as coal and the other half was bone white. One of his eyes were bright green and the other was bright red. Was he even *human*?

"Hello...." The man spoke up and George jumped, realizing he'd been staring this whole time. He was also caught off guard by the normal sound of the man's voice; it was weird but George swore he kind of sounded a bit like Technoblade.

"Hi...uh sorry for, um, staring...." George apologized, blushing a little in embarrassment. The man just smiled kindly.

"It's okay. It happens a lot," He shrugged, "It's only natural."

"Natural," The dark-skinned man snorted before glancing back at George, "So, we haven't seen you before. Are you George?"

George's eyes widened and his heart skipped a beat, "How did you know that?"

"I *knew* it!" The dark-skinned man and the tall man exchanged grins. George was still stupefied that this man that didn't look like a human seemed so kind so far, "I'm Skeppy and this is Ranboo."

"You're Skeppy?!" George choked, physically jolting. Skeppy laughed brightly.

"*Déjà vu*," Skeppy laughed out, "Yeah and before you get into it, I know. Bad's here. Ranboo was just filling me in on how well he's doing..."

George stared at them incredulously before he remembered something Sapnap said about Skeppy, "Wait, Skeppy, right? So you're in the same hall as Dream?!"

"He's my cellmate," Skeppy smiled, nodding his head as he studied George, "He's told me about you. I didn't think you'd be in a group so *soon* though..."

"Didn't seem to matter to them," George trailed off darkly but his heart was still hammering in his chest from the confirmation. Skeppy was Dream's cellmate. George opened his mouth to ask something but that died off his tongue when a few pillagers came close with a cart full of weapons.

"You know the drill. Pick your weapon," One of the pillagers ordered blandly and George frowned. All of the pillagers were armed but they didn't seem worried about supplying weapons to the prisoners. Then he remembered the pillagers liked to threaten the other prisoners' safety to keep them in line.

George walked up to the cart and felt a few of the pillagers' eyes following his every move. He did his best to ignore that as he scanned the weapons. There were swords, axes, bows, crossbows, and even shields. George immediately grabbed one of those shields and a diamond sword. He jumped when Skeppy grabbed a diamond sword as well. Most of the prisoners grabbed a sword or an axe and almost all of them got shields.

George stepped back and he couldn't help but notice a couple of the pillagers actually tensed when Ranboo stepped up to grab a diamond sword. George wondered why he was the only one that didn't bother grabbing a shield. After Ranboo picked his weapon, he simply stepped back on George's other side.

"Okay. Follow," One of the pillagers ordered and George glanced around at the others. Skeppy and Ranboo had this blank look on their faces while the three other random prisoners already looked sickly.

"Time for a long walk," Skeppy muttered under his breath and George peeked at Ranboo, unable to help himself.

Ranboo, of course, caught him staring again but he just smiled, "Are you nervous, George?"

"U-Uh, yeah. I'm not the best warrior...." George confessed and he glanced at the ground uneasily, "I don't have a lot of experience..."

"Just stay close to me then," Ranboo told him and George blinked at his tone. It wasn't quite over-confidence like he was used to hearing in Dream's tone, but there was something final about it; it was as if Ranboo truly believed that if George stayed with him he wouldn't be hurt. Period.

Skeppy made a face before he grinned, "Ranboo's right. Anyone's lucky when Ranboo's in the group."

"Stop you're going to make me blush," Ranboo smirked and Skeppy laughed, smothering it behind

his hand so the pillagers didn't notice. George was still too confused to be amused.

"C-Can I ask you about your skin or is that too insensitive?" George trailed off, sounding as awkward as he felt. Ranboo chuckled once.

"It's not. I was born looking like this...at least as far as I remember," Ranboo explained and a far-away look entered his differently colored eyes, "I don't have a lot of memories...."

"Sorry..." George whispered. It must have been horrible to not remember a lot about your life. Ranboo looked down at him.

"Its okay. It is what it is," Ranboo replied nonchalantly, seeming as though it didn't bother him much, "But yeah, I've always looked like this and I'm used to the staring."

"Are you human?" George blurted and immediately wanted to die in a hole with the way Skeppy gaped at him incredulously. Ranboo looked startled before he barked out a laugh so loud a few of the pillagers tensed and stared at them as they walked.

They were just out of the fortress and back in the warped forest that George remembered being captured in. Ranboo glanced at George again and said quietly, "There's some questions I can't answer because of...*you know*."

Ranboo gestured to the pillagers with his head and George's eyes widened in understanding. Ranboo didn't want the pillagers to hear the answer. This only heightened his curiosity but he knew better than to push any questions at someone.

"Sorry, I didn't mean to blurt that out. Sometimes I'm just so...." George stopped, sighing deeply, "Sorry.."

"It's all good," Ranboo grinned, showing sharp teeth. George shuddered.

"How can someone that looks so intimidating be so easy-going and nice?" Skeppy muttered as he shook his head. Ranboo snickered, "Even the pillagers are intimidated by him, you noticed that, right George?"

"I...I did," George nodded, looking around at the forest and ignoring pillagers that walked around their group, eyeing them every few seconds. He decided he needed to change the subject away from Ranboo, "Skeppy...um, how is Dream doing...?"

Skeppy's eyes widened and he glanced at him, "He's doing better than he was. We've been swapping stories about Sapnap and Bad."

"So he knows that Sapnap is alive?" George asked, feeling a budding smile grow on his face as he imagined Dream's reaction.

"Yeah and he knows he's with you," Skeppy grinned brightly, "He seemed relieved when I told him that."

"Sapnap is my cellmate," George chuckled, "We've also been sharing stories...."

"There's a lot I need to tell you about but..." Skeppy flicked his dark brown eyes at the pillagers and George nodded in understanding.

"Have to wait until there's a moment they aren't watching as much," Ranboo added quietly, "By the way, Skeppy, you'll stick to the other three right?"

George looked at him in confusion but Skeppy seemed to immediately understand what Ranboo was saying as his eyes went to the three other random prisoners, "Yeah. I'll do my best to make sure they don't die if you got George?"

"I got him," Ranboo smiled and George rose an eyebrow. Something about Ranboo made George feel safe, kind of like Dream, "You don't mind sticking with me, do you George?"

"I don't mind," George said immediately and they both snickered at him. George blushed.

"Just don't die, okay? Dream will have our heads," Skeppy sighed and Ranboo chuckled. George rolled his eyes.

George didn't realize everyone else were slowing to a stop and he almost ran into Skeppy. When he glanced around, his eyes widened at all the Endermen roaming around, some of them carrying blocks. The pillagers turned to the prisoners, "Alright. You know the drill. Get going and no funny business or else."

George felt frustrated. They *knew* he was new and that he didn't exactly know the 'drill' but they were just going to throw him in the fire anyways. Skeppy gave Ranboo a look and Ranboo nodded. Skeppy turned to three of the random prisoners, "Follow me."

They did so without questions and one of them shook as he walked, poor guy. George turned to Ranboo, who gestured that he follow him. George nodded and briefly glanced at the pillagers moving around, watching each prisoner intently. He was briefly confused by a couple of blinking red devices he saw two of them holding.

"That's a red stone alarm," Ranboo explained and George jumped. When he turned he saw Ranboo

looking at the same pillagers, "It's rigged back to the fortress so if any of us rebel here it'll alert the pillagers there so they can punish some of the others back at the fortress."

"Oh..." George trailed off, anger blooming in his chest.

"Follow me. Let's stick close to Skeppy just in case he needs help," Ranboo said seriously and George nodded again. Now that he met Skeppy, he was going to make sure he lived to reunite with Bad.

George followed Ranboo and silently marveled at the way his head didn't even reach Ranboo's shoulder blades. The dude was freakishly tall, it was almost unnerving. How did this guy even get captured in the first place?

He jumped at a static-like screech that filled the air. When he looked over, he paled to see two of the random prisoners blocking an attack from an Endermen. Its jaw was abnormally detached, showcasing very sharp teeth. It continued to screech horribly.

Skeppy ran forward to help them and wacked it a couple of times from behind. To George's amazement, it teleported and left behind purple particles only to reappear at Skeppy's other side. Skeppy seemed prepared because he had his shield covering him.

"George," Ranboo called and George jumped again, turning to look at the taller man. He had a serious look on his face, "You know about Endermen, right? They only attack you when you look at them and they can teleport. You'll be fine if you only look at one at a time and keep your shield up at all times, okay?"

"R-Right," George stammered and immediately pulled his shield closer. He realized one of the pillagers were glaring at him. Probably because he wasn't fighting yet. His heart sped up in fear. Could he do this? Ranboo said he'd help him out so that means he should just go for it, right?

He looked around, seeing Skeppy and another random prisoner fighting another Endermen out of the corner of his eye. George gulped and noticed a new Endermen walking around, carrying a nether rack block. Well....it's now or never.

George hesitantly glanced at the Endermen's face and he gasped when the Endermen's head whipped around to lock onto him. Its purple eyes glowed and its jaw detached in a screech as it ran right for him. George felt himself gasping, curling his hand around his diamond sword and practically smothering himself in his shield.

He cried out when the Endermen thrust its long arms out against his shield with an audible thunk and he swung his diamond sword in a long arch. It hit, surprisingly, but the Endermen only screeched louder and teleported. George could hear himself gasping in breaths.

In his peripheral, he saw Ranboo shift closer to him. The Endermen teleported to George's right side and he cried out in surprise. George's eyes widened when Ranboo ran his sword through the Endermen, killing it off. They both stopped at the round object that seemed to drop from thin air. Was that what an ender pearl looked like? It was almost bluish to George.

Ranboo pushed George back when a pillager immediately came closer to them and grabbed it before they could. Rude, what would they even be able to do with it? The pillager gave them a sharp look but backed off with the pearl.

"Good job, George," Ranboo smiled and George huffed, still feeling his heart racing.

"Thanks but I think it would have taken me a *year* to kill it if you hadn't," George replied seriously but Ranboo laughed like he'd told a joke.

Then, out of nowhere, an Endermen teleported right behind Ranboo. George froze and sucked in a breath, bringing his shield back up. Ranboo didn't seem too startled, but looked behind him instinctively. That's when George realized, Ranboo just looked at the Endermen right? Then why isn't it attacking or screeching?

George rose an eyebrow as he looked from the Endermen to Ranboo. He saw movement out of the corner of his eye and noticed with shock that at least five of the fifteen pillagers were now staring intently at Ranboo as if they were watching to see what he'd do.

Ranboo grabbed his sword and swung in a single, simple arch. The Endermen screeched once it was attacked and Ranboo got another hit in before it teleported. George's eyes widened and he looked around from behind his shield. He jumped when it teleported right behind Ranboo again, but by George's side.

George swung his sword before thinking and the Endermen cried out before dying. This one didn't leave an ender pearl, thank God. George met Ranboo's stare and he looked at him in confusion. Why did the Endermen only attack Ranboo when he *physically* attacked it?

Ranboo simply smiled but it didn't reach his eyes as if he was trying to tell George something. He glanced at the pillagers before turning to look at Skeppy. That's when George realized that the pillagers were keeping a sharp eye on Ranboo in particular. Did they notice what George noticed?

George followed Ranboo as they walked closer to Skeppy. Poor Skeppy was trying his best to keep the Endermen from straight attacking the three random prisoners, who obviously had no idea how to fight. They mainly kept themselves behind their shields.

When Skeppy accidentally looked at another Endermen, Ranboo immediately jumped in to help him out. George followed and helped Ranboo kill it off while Skeppy finished the one he was fighting. One dropped a pearl, that was two overall so far, and the pillagers wasted no time grabbing it.

Since there were no more Endermen in the immediate area, they were forced to go down further away from the fortress to look for more. George saw his opportunity to ask questions when the pillagers weren't close enough to hear them, "Ranboo..."

Ranboo smiled at him like he already knew what he'd ask. He whispered, "The Endermen don't attack me when I look at them. They only attack me when I attack them. Like self-defense."

"I noticed," George whispered back, looking around to make sure no pillagers were looking at them, "I think the pillagers did too."

"They're smart but I don't know if they *know* for sure," Ranboo murmured quietly, "That's why I don't want them to know. I'm trying to make sure they don't notice that the Endermen don't attack me."

"I understand...." George nodded, marveled by how mysterious Ranboo was as a person....if he *was* a person that is, "Thank you, by the way, for helping me."

"Anytime...you've been helping me too," Ranboo grinned, "You're pretty brave George, just like the others that have been here awhile."

"Thanks but not really," George smiled back before he remembered a question he had, "How did you get captured, if you don't mind me asking?"

Ranboo stared straight ahead, "I was traveling in the nether....I was hoping it'd jog some lost memories for me or something. I ran into the pillagers as they were scouting around and they captured me."

"So....you don't have any powers...?" George trailed off, hoping the taller man didn't get offended, "Like, no offense but...you're just so...not human?"

Ranboo laughed quietly, "I know, I know, but....I'm *mostly* normal, I think. It's a long story. Even *I* don't really understand myself."

George's heart ached in his chest at the way his voice tapered off into an almost sad one. It seemed Ranboo was more normal than he thought and he was almost pure in a way. George forced a smile on his face, "Hey, being mysterious is *cool*, right? And who knows, maybe you'll find out you have some awesome powers! Nothing wrong with that at all."

Ranboo looked at him in surprise before he smiled warmly, "Thanks George...you and the others that have been here awhile, you've never treated me like a freak."

"You're *not* one," George frowned, "I'll admit I'm still intimidated by you a little, but being different isn't *bad*."

"No, it's not," Ranboo agreed, his smile widening.

George didn't know Skeppy had heard the whole thing until he turned to make sure no pillagers were snooping around them. Skeppy was close to their side and he was staring at George brightly, like he was his new best friend. George blinked at him before laughing. Skeppy laughed too, "You're so *cool* George! I see why Dream didn't want to be separated from you."

"H-Huh?" George blushed and Skeppy paused before snickering at him.

He opened his mouth to say something else but he was cut off abruptly when several pillagers came closer. George frowned but didn't say anything. They eventually stopped again when they spotted a few more Endermen. George really wanted to punch the pillager when he ordered them again, "Go. Get a move on."

"Stupid freaking..." Skeppy trailed off as they walked away. He sighed and turned to the three other prisoners who were already shifting closer to him, "Follow me. Let's do it like last time."

"Same with us," Ranboo told George and he nodded, "Only let's keep closer to Skeppy this time."

"Right," George smiled, glancing over at him.

It was easier the second time around, since George knew more of what to expect. As long as he kept his shield up and the Endermen didn't break it, he was good. And now that he knew Ranboo couldn't trigger an Endermen the way normal people could, he made a point of looking at them when Ranboo did, hoping to keep suspicion off him.

It still freaked him out to directly look at one and he noticed Ranboo was looking at him in surprise but George felt worried at what would happen if the pillagers knew about Ranboo's abilities.

By the time they were done, they'd killed five more Endermen but none of them dropped any pearls. Thankfully, the pillagers ordered them to begin the walk back to the fortress as it was obvious they were all dead on their feet and couldn't fight anymore without just dying straight away.

On the walk back, Skeppy and Ranboo kept close to George. He realized they wanted to tell them something but had to wait when eyes weren't on them as much. George glanced at Skeppy as they neared the fortress, "Skeppy, can you, um, tell Dream something for me?"

"Oh, for sure," Skeppy nodded, smiling easily, "What is it?"

"Can you tell him that Sapnap and I are okay? And tell him we'll definitely be ready for anything he has planned," George grinned. George just knew that Dream was probably already thinking of several ways to escape the fortress.

Skeppy's eyes widened before he laughed, "I'll tell him. And Ranboo, can you tell Bad that I'm okay and that I love him...?"

"Of course, Skeppy," Ranboo said immediately, like he was going to do that *regardless* if he were asked and George decided that he really liked Ranboo then.

Skeppy turned back to George seriously and, after checking to make sure no pillagers were eyeing them, he whispered, "We *are* already planning an escape...it'll probably take time though."

"Yeah, I thought it would," George whispered back with a nod.

"There's this other new prisoner named Wilbur..." Skeppy added as he glanced around at the pillagers, "He's Technoblade's brother."

"*What?*" George gasped, immediately clamping a hand over his mouth, "I've met Techno before...how did Wilbur even get captured?"

"He was sent by Techno to investigate people being trapped in the nether," Skeppy explained and George's eyes widened. He remembered Techno saying he was going to send someone he trusted to look into things. That was Wilbur? "I just wanted to let you know that Wilbur believes Techno will bring a group to the nether to find him, he just doesn't know *when*."

"Oh God..." George trailed off, staring at the ground. Skeppy nodded and Ranboo just smirked, "That'd help a lot. If they come we can definitely escape on that same day...if only we knew when they were coming."

"Yeah...and I'll help out the best I can too," Ranboo spoke up and George glanced at him, "Don't ask me how but I know a way to break the locks on the cells."

Skeppy looked absolutely stunned and George realized this must be the first time Ranboo admitted this. Skeppy bit his lip, "Why haven't you told us that before?"

"Because I can't do it fast or anything and we could easily get caught," Ranboo whispered, looking down warily, "I just don't want anyone to die here because of me. So I never mentioned it until now. I'd be able to use it at the right time."

"Fine, it's okay, I'm not mad or anything," Skeppy sighed, "I'm just surprised is all. I'll tell the

others."

"Me too," George smiled reassuringly at Ranboo.

"Get inside and relinquish your weapons immediately," A pillager suddenly ordered and George glanced up in surprise. He didn't realize they were already at the fortress walls.

George quietly followed inside after the others and discarded his sword and shield onto the cart that was still there. One of the pillagers immediately pushed it away and soon other pillagers were forcing them down the halls. George glanced at Skeppy and Ranboo, "See you sometime soon hopefully."

"Bye George..." Ranboo frowned, "Stay safe..."

"See you guys another time," Skeppy said thickly and George was surprised to see he looked emotional. Then he felt like he could relate.

When Skeppy stepped down the hall towards their cell looking like he was one word away from crying, Dream felt like his heart fell down into his toes. Fundy shot up immediately as Skeppy quietly stepped into the cell and the pillagers escorting him left without another word. Wilbur spoke up first, "Are you okay Skeppy? Did something happen out there?"

"Oh, no, I'm just a bit frustrated," Skeppy sighed, wiping his face with his hands, "I got a lot to tell you guys. I saw Ranboo and George out there."

"You saw George?!" Dream gasped, his eyes widening and his heart skipping a few beats, "Is he okay?! Did he get hurt out there at all?!"

Skeppy stared at him with a look he didn't recognize but then he smiled, "He's okay. He handled himself pretty well for someone who says they don't know what they're doing."

Dream felt so relieved to hear that George wasn't hurt that his legs almost gave out on him. He heaved a heavy sigh of relief and Skeppy added, "Plus Ranboo protected him."

"Wow, you guys got lucky having Ranboo there today," Fundy grinned as he looked relieved himself, "So...anything happen? You said you had something to tell us."

"Wait...who is Ranboo?" Dream questioned, feeling insanely curious. The way Fundy spoke earlier, it was as if having Ranboo in your group was the best thing that could happen. Why was that?

"Ranboo's just another prisoner but...there's something *different* about him," Skeppy explained and he looked down the hall like he was checking for pillagers, "He doesn't look human."

Dream's eyebrows shot up, "He doesn't look human...? *How?*"

"He's got half black and half white skin, same with his hair. His eyes are two different colors as well," Fundy said slowly, watching Dream, "He acts pretty human though and says he doesn't have many memories."

"He's mysterious..." Wilbur added, "Though I don't know as much as these two. I have met him only two times."

"He sounds *interesting*," Dream said honestly. Now he was even more curious. He wanted to meet Ranboo for himself. Skeppy looked at Dream and laughed.

"You and George are kind of similar it seems," Skeppy commented with a bright look, "Most people don't react to seeing or hearing about Ranboo the way you guys do. Ranboo seems to really like George."

Dream tried not to feel jealous, he *really* did, but he couldn't stop himself from saying, "Apparently *everyone* likes George when they meet him."

Wilbur and Fundy stared at him while Skeppy threw his head back and laughed, "The way you said that! *Haha!*"

"Is George your lover?" Wilbur asked curiously and Dream's mouth fell open as he felt himself turn red.

"No! He's not....." Dream trailed off when the three of them looked at him like they didn't believe him, "I mean I...I would *like* it to be that way but it's not like that..."

"Oh..." Fundy sighed, "Well there goes my chance with you."

"*What?!*" Dream cried out in shock and Wilbur choked on a laugh. Skeppy barked out laughter like he laughing was painful for him. Fundy began laughing as well.

"Just kidding," Fundy grinned.

"S-Speaking of George, I have a message for you from him," Skeppy added and Dream perked up, ignoring how Wilbur chuckled at that, "He wanted me to tell you that he and Sapnap are doing okay and that they're ready for whatever you plan to do."

"I see..." Dream smiled at the ground, his chest filling with warmth. George was safe and he was doing okay. He said Sapnap was okay and they already sounded confident that Dream is planning something. Dream chuckled.

"Aww no 'I love you'?" Fundy joked but Dream's eyes widened, a prick of sudden disappointment and hurt flooding him.

"He doesn't feel that way about me," Dream said flatly before he thought about it. Fundy and Skeppy's chuckles died off immediately and Wilbur's eyes widened. Dream's shoulders slumped and he felt a bit embarrassed.

"Really?" Skeppy spoke up, sounding awkward, "The way he talks about you though and the way he reacted when I told him about you...I thought for sure he felt something for you."

Dream rose an eyebrow, "It's complicated for George, I'm sure. He grew up without friends and was shunned in his village. I doubt he'd know what it's like to be in love."

"Oh...that sucks," Wilbur frowned, crossing his arms. Fundy shifted his eyes away awkwardly and Skeppy coughed into his fist.

"Well I can't speak for him. He just blushed a lot when we talked about you," Skeppy shrugged and Dream stared at the ground quietly. The things that Skeppy was saying are things George did a

lot anyways, "Well, once we're out of this hell hole I say go for it!"

"Yeah we'll be your wingmen," Wilbur smiled a little and Dream laughed, shaking his head.

"Don't need you guys to do that. George doesn't have to return my feelings," Dream said, feeling sad even as he said them, "The only thing you guys can do for me is protect him if you're grouped up with him."

"For sure," Skeppy grinned, nodding his head.

"Yup, we'll help protect your lover," Fundy smirked and Dream groaned.

"It's not *like* that! You guys better not say that around him," Dream warned, narrowing his eyes. Fundy and Skeppy shrugged. Wilbur laughed.

"Anyways, changing the subject here," Skeppy said and laughed once Dream muttered 'thank God' under his breath, "Ranboo told me and George something interesting just before I came back down here."

"What's that?" Fundy asked curiously, tilting his head.

"He said he knew a way to break the locks to the cells," Skeppy explained as a conflicted look entered his eyes. Dream looked surprised, "He didn't tell us *how* only that it'd take a minute and he never told us about it before because he was scared."

"Scared?" Wilbur asked, his eyebrows furrowing in confusion.

"Ranboo can do things most humans can't and he seems connected to Endermen in a way," Skeppy commented quietly, his eyes flicking down the hall, "He doesn't want the pillagers to find out what he can do and use it. He's scared that will happen and he's also scared that if he gets caught someone will die because of him."

They went quiet and Dream frowned, extremely curious what it was that Ranboo could do. He'd seen some pretty outlandish things in the world as he traveled but the things he's hearing about Ranboo are unlike anything he's ever encountered before.

"That'll come in handy when we plan our escape," Wilbur spoke up, leaning against the wall as he stared up at the ceiling, "I wish I had a way of telling when my family will be coming for me."

"Are you *sure* they'll be coming?" Fundy questioned hesitantly, like he didn't want to offend Wilbur. Wilbur looked over at Fundy and smiled.

"I'm positive. Nothing will stop them until they find me," Wilbur explained softly, "It's just a matter of when and how. All we have to do is plan things on our end and hold out until they get here."

"We can hold out," Dream muttered as his hands curled into fists, "These pillagers don't get to take anyone else away from me."

"*Stop* you're gonna make me cry Dream," Skeppy said thickly and Wilbur chuckled.

"Man, you and Sapnap make a pair," Fundy grinned out and Dream's eyes widened as he looked up to stare at Fundy, "Not making fun, but you and Sapnap are both not afraid to be all affectionate with actions or words. You're sentimental."

"Sapnap's still like that?" Dream smiled, his heart thudding peacefully in his chest when Fundy nodded. One worry he's been harboring is that his best friend will have changed a lot over the years, "Bad's like that too."

Skeppy's eyes widened and he froze, looking over at Dream, who added, "He's like our mom friend. He gets mad when we curse."

Wilbur and Fundy laughed loudly and Skeppy smiled warmly at the floor. Dream snickered, feeling a lot better than he did earlier. After their laughter died down, Fundy sighed softly, "I can't wait to have more moments like this...but with *everyone*."

Dream felt an ache in his chest at that but smiled teasingly, "Now who's sentimental?"

"Oh shut up," Fundy blushed and he glanced at Wilbur, "When we escape...d-do you think Technoblade will let us live in his village?"

Wilbur's eyes widened as he went silent. Fundy, Dream, and Skeppy all stared at him, waiting for an answer. Wilbur looked thoughtful for a moment before he shrugged, "I don't see why not, personally, but it's....there's this process we use for newcomers. Though this is kind of a unique situation so I'm sure you'll be accepted regardless."

"A process?" Dream asked, tilting his head.

"Newcomers that want to live in the village have to undergo an interview, just some questions for precaution, you know? You also get a two-week trial of living there so you can change your mind. Or...if we change our mind about you," Wilbur explained as he looked serious, "We do this to weed out those that could be dangerous. I don't see us having a problem accepting any of you."

"That's a relief," Fundy smiled hesitantly, "Most of us...we have no where to go even if we escaped."

"I see...you should definitely come then," Wilbur grinned, "Besides I like all of you."

They blinked at how easy he said that and Dream snickered, "I'm curious though, has it always been like that?"

"Well...no...not exactly. Our father Philza is the one that recommended interviewing people and making them have a trial-period of living there. He said it was smarter that way," Wilbur explained and he grinned, "Phil is very smart."

"He sounds like it," Skeppy said as Fundy and Dream nodded in agreement, "How did you guys end up at that village?"

Wilbur's eyes grew a little wide and his shoulders tensed before he relaxed and smiled teasingly, "What? You want to know my backstory now?"

"Sure, why not?" Dream teased right back, smirking. Wilbur chuckled, "If we're going to end up living in the same village, why not get to know each other better?"

"Fine, fine," Wilbur relented, shaking his head in amusement, "Techno, Tommy, and myself....we're all from an orphanage that resided near a snowy taiga biome. We were quite close to each other even then and our life there wasn't terrible."

"But...?" Fundy questioned warily, sensing the bad part coming.

"One day a couple of villages banded together and donated emeralds to our orphanage so we could have enough supplies to last the winter. Somehow...a group of bandits learned about the donation," Wilbur frowned, crossing his arms tightly, "They came at night and raided the orphanage, killing anyone they could find so their identities couldn't be reported."

"Techno managed to smuggle me and Tommy out. Techno was 13 and I was 11...Tommy was only 7. I can still remember when one of the bandits discovered us trying to escape that was the *first* time Techno ever killed a person. It didn't even seem to bother him," Wilbur said tightly and Dream's eyes widened, "It was scary....how easy he killed that man. How good he was at fighting even as a kid."

"Yikes," Skeppy shivered and Fundy's eyes grew large.

"Yeah, anyways, we wandered the wilderness and managed to survive off any berries we could find," Wilbur continued, licking his lips, "And then we met Philza. He was a traveler then and he saved us when we were surrounded by polar bears. I'll never forget it. He offered us to stay with him in the prosperous village he resided in when he wasn't traveling. We agreed and moved to where the village is now before it was built up to what it is today."

"Wow, so Phil is originally from the village that Techno runs now?" Fundy asked, his eyes still wide.

"Yeah he was. He lost his wife to illness so he became a traveler. When he learned of our circumstances he offered to adopt us without a second thought. He said him and his wife had always wanted children but she became ill before they could try," Wilbur explained, looking sadly at the ground, "Phil is such a great guy. I'm really glad to have met him."

"He sounds really cool," Dream grinned, "You're pretty lucky."

Wilbur smiled back, "Yeah I am...and when Phil meets *you all* I'm sure he'll fight to make sure you definitely get to stay in the village after this is all over."

Chapter End Notes

I didn't realize how long this chapter was until it was over....😁 Anyways I loved coming up with my own little story of how Philza adopted his three boys! Hope you did too. 😊

As always, if you are confused about anything then let me know in the comments and I'll be sure to reply! Thanks for reading!!!!

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Chaos ensues; in which things go from 100 to 0 real quick.

Chapter Notes

Hi guys! I hope you're all doing well! I can't believe that this story went from 90 bookmarks to 105, thank you so much!!

WARNING: Mentions of mild torture and cruelty. There's also descriptions of panic attacks (don't want to trigger anyone).

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George was led down the left staircase after Skeppy said his goodbyes and he couldn't help but laugh when he saw his new friends all standing, almost pressed against the bars of their cells, so they could see down the hall. George smiled to himself at the excitement in Sapnap's eyes when he saw George there.

He noticed one of the pillagers move in the corner of his eye and glanced over at him a little, surprised when he met the pillager's stare. There was a look of knowledge there that he didn't understand and he was turning to flick his eyes at Sapnap. George rose an eyebrow but didn't say anything. What was that about?

George shook his head and smiled again when he was brought in front of his cell and he was practically pulled in the cell by Sapnap once the pillagers opened the door. George gasped when Sapnap pulled him in a hug so tight it hurt. He glanced over Sapnap's shoulder, however, to see the pillagers staring at them before they left, not uttering a single word. Why were they staring at them?

"George! Thank *GOD* you're okay!" Sapnap said loudly, squeezing once and laughing when George grunted. He eased up on the hug but didn't let go, "You look like there's no scratch on you!"

"That's because there's not," George giggled when Karl and Quackity looked at him like they refused to believe it were true. Sapnap finally let him go but didn't move away from him. His amber eyes roamed over George, checking for injuries. George grinned.

"I was there with Skeppy and Ranboo. They gave some helpful advice," George explained and Karl gasped. Sapnap's eyes widened and Quackity laughed.

"Lucky!" Quackity grinned out happily, "I think the last time I got to group with Ranboo was like a month ago!"

"Well, thank God you got Ranboo," Sapnap sighed, looking extremely relieved, "And Skeppy's not bad either."

"Yeah and by the way, I got things to tell you guys," George smiled eagerly and they blinked at him, "First, you know about Ranboo, right?"

"You mean that he's basically half-Endermen?" Karl joked, smirking, "Oh yeah. Pretty much everyone here knows something's up with Ranboo besides his looks."

"Right," George nodded and he sat on the ground carefully, snickering when Sapnap immediately sat cross-legged beside him. Sapnap noticed his snickering and stuck his tongue out at him immaturely. George laughed, "So I should probably start by saying that Skeppy told us that he, Dream, and the others are definitely planning for an escape soon."

"Wait, what?" Quackity gasped as Karl froze, looking over at George with a stunned expression. George frowned a little. Was it really *that* surprising that they were planning an escape? Karl's eyes glossed over in thought and that's when George realized Karl wasn't staring at *him* but at Sapnap.

George glanced at Sapnap and froze himself when he saw how pale the usually tan male was. His eyes were wide and almost unseeing as he stared at the floor with fear, "S-Sap...?"

He nudged Sapnap with his shoulder, scooting just a bit closer to Sapnap to hopefully soothe him. For some reason, Sapnap looked absolutely fearful of what George just said. George's heart rate picked up. Was he wrong before? Was Sapnap actually *not* prepared for a possible escape? Why?

"G-George..." Sapnap choked out, finally raising his head and glancing over at him, "Why are they....they don't know....they can't..."

"Why can't they? Sapnap, what's wrong?" George urged his question, grabbing Sapnap's hand with both of his. He winced when Sapnap immediately squeezed his hand like he was grounding himself. He glanced to see Quackity looking lost and Karl was still staring at Sapnap, frowning sympathetically.

"If they try....and they *fail* then people will be punished," Sapnap swallowed heavily, his other hand shaking in his lap. George's face dropped as he realized what Sapnap was afraid of.

"No, no, no," George shook his head, squeezing Sapnap's hand with both of his again as he rushed to explain, "There's a prisoner here called Wilbur and his family are pretty much experienced fighters, I think. They'll be coming for him so I think Dream and Skeppy want to plan for an escape

around the time they'll come."

"Wait really?" Quackity gasped out, his eyes growing wide with strangled hope. Sapnap and Karl, however, didn't look as hopeful or convinced as he did.

"But they don't know *when* they'll come do they?" Sapnap stressed, fear still oozing from him, "All it takes is getting caught and they'll....."

He cut himself off and stared at the ground, his eyes still wide with distress. George frowned, unsure what to do or say to calm Sapnap down. It seemed to be helping that he was holding his hand but George felt useless. Why would Sapnap be so scared of mentioning escape...?

George's eyes widened as a revelation fell upon him, "S-Sapnap....have you tried to escape before?"

Sapnap shoulders hunched forward like he was shielding himself as his breath hitched and he frowned at the ground, his eyes still wide. He nodded his head and took a deep steadying breath, "I tried escaping twice since being captured..."

"What.....what happened both times...?" George trailed off, realizing that Quackity's eyes were wide like he didn't know that information but Karl's frowned deepened like he did know.

Sapnap sighed shakily, "It's a very long story so bare with me here. The first time was during my first year here. Some people from my village were still here and there were others....we got word around and planned to try to take a lot of them down when they gave us weapons when we 'go out'."

"Oh..." George froze, his eyes widening as he pictured it in his mind. Sapnap paused for a moment before looking over at George hesitantly.

"Then one day we felt confident enough to try our plan and I was part of the group chosen that day. Once we grabbed some swords and shields we tried to attack them. It seemed to be working at first but as we tried to free the others, more came down and...." Sapnap paused again, wincing at the memory, "They beat us, took away our weapons, and then they forced us to take off our chest plates so that they could whip us."

"Oh my God...." George breathed, removing one of his hands from Sapnap's to hold his mouth in shock. He heard Quackity suck in a sharp breath.

Sapnap nodded slowly before his shoulders slumped even further, "But that was *nothing* compared to what happened the second time I tried escaping."

"Y-You don't have to talk a-about it," George said, feeling guilty that he was bringing up such

terrible memories. Sapnap shook his head, turned to face George fully, and squeezed his hand.

"I want you to know...t-to understand why I'm so freaked out. Why I'm not sure about planning an escape...." Sapnap swallowed heavily and George nodded hesitantly, squeezing Sapnap's hand back, "The second time I tried escaping was only four months after the first....there were more people then and I thought that gave us a leg up. I thought just because the pillagers had numbers didn't mean they couldn't be taken off guard by us."

Sapnap glanced from George down to the ground, sighing, "I had a lot of pent of rage back then, still do really, but I wanted to get back at the pillagers for everything they'd done. Back then they hadn't decked out this place so much and when they built the cells it was first made from stone, not iron. The locks weren't perfect then so one night I picked it."

"T-This was four years ago?" George had to confirm and Sapnap nodded his head.

"About four years ago, yeah. Karl or any of the others that have been here awhile weren't here yet by that time so it was just me," Sapnap admitted, a look flashing across his eyes. George glanced at Karl, who was staring sadly at the ground. If Karl wasn't there when it happened that must mean that Sapnap already told him this story before.

"What did you do once you picked the lock?" Quackity questioned quietly, staring at Sapnap intently, obviously invested in the story.

Sapnap looked over at him, "I picked the lock on everyone else's cell in the hall and I led them back up to the platform. I didn't pick the lock on the cells in the other two halls because I figured it'd take too much time and I figured it'd be easier for just us to sneak around."

"It *was* easier to sneak around and I eventually led the others to the stairs behind the platform. I knew that led to several other hallways and rooms that the pillagers kept to themselves in," Sapnap explained slowly, "They weren't patrolling as often back then...."

"And then...?" George prompted, earning Sapnap's attention. Sapnap frowned, his eyes lighting up with rage.

"I eventually found the room where they kept their valuables. I was stunned that no one was guarding it and I had been prepared to fight. I grabbed all the ender pearls they'd managed to get at that point and took it back with us," Sapnap growled out and George's eyes widened, remembering when he asked Karl why the pillagers didn't already have enough pearls for an end portal. No way....

"Did you destroy them?" George asked immediately and Sapnap nodded.

"We snuck back up to the platform and I threw the ender pearls over the edge into the lava. You

have *no* idea how satisfying that was," Sapnap smiled wistfully and a shiver washed over George's body, "But soon after I did that, a few pillagers came around the corner and spotted us."

"Oh God..." Quackity choked, putting his hand over his mouth and George's heart skipped a beat as he realized the terrible part of the story was here.

Sapnap's eyes glazed over, "They immediately started yelling and I started yelling at the other prisoners to grab *anything* they could find to defend themselves and fight back. It didn't end well."

"We handled our own pretty okay until another group came from behind the platform, enraged because they found out that the pearls were missing," Sapnap shuddered, "They realized what happened and that's when they began to push down on us harder. I'll never forget it. They fought like hell on earth and demanded to know who destroyed all their progress."

Sapnap actually had tears forming in his eyes at that point and George's entire chest ached like he wasn't breathing. He felt so bad for him, "The rest of the prisoners, most of whom I knew from childhood from my own village, turned on me in an instant, thinking they wouldn't be punished if they did."

"S-Sap...." Quackity gasped out, looking ready to cry on his behalf and George knew he didn't look any better but he could physically get words out of his mouth if he tried.

"I was so shocked and maybe I shouldn't have been. I'm not the smartest out there and the plan was reckless from the start so I understand now why they'd try to shift everything on me then," Sapnap shrugged but his eyes betrayed how he was really feeling, "The pillagers grabbed me and took me down the back of the platform. We walked down the hallway on the right until we went down this insanely long staircase. It led so far down."

"Really?" George swallowed, "Why so far down...?"

"Because there's a room there. It hovers above the lava lake but not enough to be, like, *lethal* or anything just enough to immediately make you sweat," Sapnap winced and George inhaled sharply, "I named it the sweatbox, which is what they call it now, and they threw me in the room before latching the door closed behind me. They told me I was going to stay there for two days as my punishment."

"Oh god....you could have died from dehydration," George's breath hitched in horror and Sapnap nodded.

"It was....terrible. It was so fucking hot and it felt like it was zapping all of my energy but the worst....the worst was when I heard people screaming. I realized that the pillagers were killing the prisoners that had been with me," Sapnap said lowly, squeezing George's hand, "When they let me out two days later and took me back to the left hall of cells, there was no one there. It was only me left."

"Sapnap...that's awful...." George said, his heart falling to his feet, "No wonder you looked so panicked before...."

"They've had it out for me since. They've never lost their hostility towards me for fucking up their plans," Sapnap said in a dark tone, his eyes piercing, "So...i-if Dream wants to escape...h-he better be *damn* sure we can do this or I-I don't know....I don't think I can handle something like that again."

It went quiet and George briefly glanced over to see Karl rubbing Quackity's back and whispering comforting words to him. George's flicked his eyes back to Sapnap, who was peeking at him with an anxious look on his face. George couldn't understand why someone like Sapnap, or anyone really, had to go through something like that. Ever.

"Sapnap," George growled, startling his new friend. He leaned forward and used both his hands to squeeze Sapnap's comfortingly, "I promise you, I don't care what I have to do, I won't let you have to go through something like that again."

Sapnap's eyes grew wide as he stared at him in a mix of shock and wonder before he smiled weakly, "You can't promise that George."

George simply smiled, "Maybe not....but I still do though. You won't have to go back in that room. And Dream can be reckless but I'm sure that Skeppy and the other's aren't and won't let him be...so don't worry okay?"

"I'll try..." Sapnap sighed, his head slumping as he stared at their hands.

"I promise Sapnap, really," George said in his best genuine tone and Sapnap looked back up to meet his eyes. George grinned, "We're definitely getting you and the others out of here. It just might take a little time. You believe me right?"

Karl and Quackity let out quiet little laughs and Sapnap's mouth finally quirked into a smile that looked real, "Yeah, I believe you George...."

"Great! But right now, I'm exhausted!" George sighed as he gently pulled away from Sapnap and moved to lay flat on the ground.

"Well it *is* late," Sapnap grinned as he laid down beside George, "We should probably get some sleep."

"I second that," Karl said playfully and George was happy to have diffused the tension a little, "Goodnight guys..."

"Goodnight..."

When George awoke the next morning, he felt a familiar sense of *deja vu*. He couldn't explain the tenseness he felt, like something terrible had already happened when in fact it hadn't. At least, George hoped not. It left him with a sense of anxiety that was even worse than yesterday when he was chosen to go out and fight.

He desperately hid this from the others, especially Sarnap, because the poor guy seemed to *finally* be coming around his own anxiety from the previous night when George told him there was an escape plan in the works. He didn't want to bring his anxiety back up when George wouldn't even know how to explain why he was feeling the way he was feeling. No need to work up anyone else for no reason.

But George found it left him with little to no appetite, but he ate a little bit of the breakfast rice that was given that morning so that Sarnap wouldn't notice. Instead, he smiled when Karl told an embarrassing story about how he'd gotten lost in the woods once as a child and then forced laughter when Quackity told them of a time he humiliated himself in front of a girl from his village.

Apparently though, Sarnap's ability to simply understand George at odd times was more powerful than he realized because after they finished eating, Sarnap scooted closer to him and gave him a look, "So, what's bothering you?"

George's eyes widened, "Huh?"

"You haven't eaten much and your smile is all weird or something," Sarnap frowned, staring George right in the eyes like he was searching for any lie-telling, "What's up?"

"I..." George wilted; there was no way he could lie reasonably here, "I just feel a bit anxious and I don't....I don't really know where it's coming from."

Sarnap leaned back and rose an eyebrow. Quackity, however, snorted in amusement, "Hey, don't worry George! We all get that sometimes. At least you know you don't have to go out today!"

"I've had a feeling like this before....almost," George added, his eyes narrowing at Quackity, who quickly went silent.

"When?" Karl asked, tilting his head. His voice took on a strained note that didn't suit the cheerful boy and his eyes were too serious.

"The day I met Dream..." George paused, surprised by the wave of emotion that overcame him at remembering the day he met Dream. He swallowed heavily, "I woke up that morning feeling a type of anxiousness....like I knew things were gonna change somehow."

"Maybe you're thinking too much about things," Karl frowned, rubbing his arm, "Sounds like you're getting overwhelmed or something..."

"Yeah, don't work yourself up, okay?" Quackity said in a soothing tone, looking wary. George didn't respond and looked over at Sarnap. He was surprised to meet his amber eyes. Sarnap was staring at him seriously, his eyes glazed over in thought.

"Sarnap?" George asked quietly, his fingers twitching to reach out and grab his shoulder or something. He was worried that he'd done exactly what he didn't want to do and worried Sarnap.

Sarnap's eyes cleared as he blinked. He then smiled tensely, "Don't worry, George. I'm sure Karl's right! We should talk about other things to take your mind off it!"

"Yeah!" Karl chirped but it sounded slightly forced. George saw Quackity give Karl a worried look.

George smiled hesitantly, "Okay, sure. We should talk about something nice..."

"Yeah, like what we wanna do when we get outta here," Sarnap grinned, his eyes lighting up, "I am going to pig out on so much food it won't be funny."

"Right," George laughed out, hearing Karl laugh along with him. Quackity gasped.

"Oh heck yes! You have the right idea!" Quackity cheered and Sarnap chuckled, his grin widening a little.

"Alright then, what kind of food are you looking forward to the most?" George questioned, nudging Sarnap with his arm.

"Easy! I want to eat a whole pizza by myself!" Sarnap replied and George let out a loud laugh as Karl whooped, "I wanna make it myself so I can put all my favorite toppings on it!"

"You'd need quite a lot of ingredients to make it," George teased and Sarnap grinned.

"We'll find all the ingredients no sweat. You'll make a pizza with me when we get out, right Gogy?" Sarnap asked with a teasing smile of his own.

George's eyes widened and he choked out a laugh, "*Gogy?!"*

"It's so perfect oh my God!" Karl gasped out, still laughing.

"Why didn't I think of that?!" Quackity boomed excitedly, "It's like short for Georgie!"

George froze in the middle of laughing, his heart jumping in his chest at the familiar nickname. *Georgie*. Dream called him that pretty often. Hearing that name brought back the anxious feelings he'd almost stopped thinking about. George's mouth tensed.

"George?" Sapnap paused, his smile falling when he noticed George's expression. George just waved a hand.

"It's nothing. Dream-" George's explanation was cut off at the sound of approaching murmurs. They all immediately tensed and George turned so that he could peer down the hall.

Several pillagers were coming down, like they usually did, and began walking down the hall. George's heart fell to his feet when he noticed the other random prisoners scurrying to the corners of their cells in fear of being chosen to fight. The pillagers, however, passed by all of them to stand by George's cell.

"You," One pillager sneered, glaring at Sapnap, "Come."

"What?! But he went just the other day!" Quackity cried out, his eyes going large. George closed his eyes, feeling waves of anxiety hitting him full force.

"And you," Another pillager pointed at Karl, who tensed, "Come along."

"Don't worry Quackity," Sapnap soothed, putting on a brave face as George opened his eyes to look at him. Sapnap's eyes were shining with withheld hostility, "They're just hoping I get killed out there."

Karl's mouth dropped open at the smart talk but the first pillager that sneered at Sapnap just snorted, continuing to glare at him. George's heart plummeted again as he remembered Sapnap's story from before and he grabbed Sapnap's wrist, "Sapnap..."

"Don't worry George," Sapnap said softly, patting George's hand with his other one and George's eyes widened when he realized Sapnap's eyes were also shining with hope. He realized that Sapnap was hoping again for the chance to see Dream.

George quickly let Sapnap go when the pillagers started getting angry and his heart began hammering in his chest when both Sapnap and Karl stepped out of their respective cells, "Sapnap....if you *do* see him, please keep him calm."

"Huh?" Sapnap retorted, looking confused for a moment before his eyes lit up in understanding, "If

I see him I'll try to make sure he doesn't do anything stupid."

Nothing more was said as the pillagers forced Sapnap and Karl to move. George shared a helpless look with Quackity before George leaned back and sighed, staring at the ceiling. Maybe Dream will get chosen for the day and Sapnap will be able to meet him; that'd be a great thing, right?

So then why did George feel so anxious?

"What do you think Techno might be planning?" Dream asked randomly after they'd eaten their breakfast rice.

Wilbur groaned, "I just woke up not fifteen minutes ago. I'm too tired to think Dream."

Dream rolled his eyes, "Tough, Wilbur. It's something we need to talk about."

"Fine," Wilbur sighed loudly, "I'm not entirely sure to be honest. Techno will probably find a way to scout the place out before he thinks about attacking the pillagers."

"How do you know they'll even be able to find you?" Fundy asked quietly, looking serious.

"I'm not worried about them not being able to find me," Wilbur shrugged, his eyes glazing over in thought, "Phil's a really good tracker and he taught Techno everything he knows. So they'd have two insane trackers in the group."

"Oh..." Fundy blinked, surprised.

"That's helpful," Skeppy grinned out brightly and Dream nodded in agreement, "Though it'll still be hard to track in the nether."

"True, but not impossible," Wilbur smirked as he settled back against the wall. They all froze when they heard murmuring and footsteps.

"And they're back," Fundy muttered angrily under his breath. Dream immediately stood to face the pillagers if they came close. The last thing he wanted was to appear weak to anyone. Dream saw Skeppy stand by his side out of the corner of his eye.

The pillagers surprisingly went past all the other cells and came to a stop directly in front of Dream, who rose an eyebrow when they studied him with obvious disdain. He hadn't even *done* anything yet. One pointed at him, "You, come out now."

"And you," Another behind him pointed at Wilbur, who blinked in surprise before he schooled his

expression into a calm one. Dream was kind of impressed with that.

"Well, I'd say good luck but something tells me you don't need it," Skeppy laughed tensely, gently slapping Dream's back. Dream appreciated that he was keeping up positivity and smiled at him.

"I'll be back no problem," Dream smirked confidently and paused when he heard one of the pillagers scoff. They were glaring at him. Dream ignored that and stepped out when they opened his cell door.

Wilbur walked out as well and didn't even glance towards any of the pillagers. And Dream squared his shoulders trying to adopt the nonchalant and confident attitude that Wilbur was oozing. It's not that he didn't feel confident it's just that he was worried about doing something wrong.

And apparently, the pillagers just had it out for him today because one of them clicked their tongues at him, their glare deepening as they spat out, "Look who thinks they're top dog! Think whatever you want, you put one toe out of line and I won't think twice about punishing that pretty brunette boy."

Dream tensed, his face heating up in rage. Wilbur also tensed, his face darkening for a second and Dream jumped when Wilbur grabbed his wrist and squeezed enough to hurt like he was trying to ground him. Dream glared over at him but Wilbur shook his head before letting go of Dream's wrist.

Dream ground his teeth together, trying to take a deep breath because now the pillager looked smug before they turned around and it took *everything* in him not to lash out. He silently thanked Wilbur for grounding him before he did something stupid and got someone hurt for it.

He was silent as they were led the rest of the way up to the platform and Dream's attention was immediately caught on the other people there. As the pillagers drifted off to prepare things for their little outing, Dream noticed the other prisoners stop what they're doing to stare at them.

Wilbur gave a small smile and a little wave to the only woman in the group, who smiled brightly, "Hi again Wilbur!"

"Hi Nikki," Wilbur greeted with a small chuckle. Dream looked away from them when his eyes caught sight of a man with tan skin and amber eyes. Dream's breath caught in his throat as their eyes met.

Dream could swear up and down that he'd know Sapnap *anywhere*, no matter how much time had passed. He'd know that raven-black hair, amber eyes, and stupid white bandana anywhere. Dream actually felt his eyes burning as the man studied him for a second before his amber eyes widened and his mouth parted in shock, "N-No way...*Dream?*"

"Sapnap?" Dream retorted, swallowing heavily when he almost choked just trying to say his name. Sapnap's wide eyes filled disbelief and excitement. Dream wasn't prepared for Sapnap to run at him and jump on him for a hug so fierce that Dream stumbled back and hit the nether-brick wall behind him, "Sapnap...."

"I can't *believe it!* I was hoping but..." Sapnap started saying but stopped to squeeze him. Dream wrapped his arms around him and marveled at the fact that his friend was actually here, alive. He'd actually found him, "You're *here!*"

"Y-Yeah," Dream smirked and squeezed really hard once, wheezing when he heard Sapnap whine and push him away, "Dude its....it's *so* good to finally see you. You have *no* idea how long I've been looking for you."

Sapnap grinned, his eyes the brightest thing in the room. The other prisoners had gone quiet and were just staring at them. That's when Dream noticed that a lot of the pillagers were also staring at them, studying them. It made Dream uncomfortable and he shifted.

"A long lost friendship and a reunion...." The girl, Nikki, said with emotional tears in her wood-brown eyes. Wilbur laughed at the look on her face. She sniffed once, "I'm not crying, *you* are..."

"I'm not doing anything," Wilbur teased and Nikki swatted at him. Sapnap chuckled at the pair.

"That was quite something. I'm surprised you didn't kiss," Another brunette teased, his blue eyes lit up with amusement. Dream flushed, slightly embarrassed.

Sapnap just laughed loudly, "Shut up Antfrost."

"I'm so happy for you guys!" Yet another brunette cheered, his light brown eyes shining with excitement, "So you're Dream? I'm Karl!"

"Uh, hi... nice to meet you all," Dream smiled hesitantly before looking back at Sapnap, meeting his eyes again, "You're okay, right?"

"Yes," Sapnap grinned and something entered his eyes, "And George is okay too."

Dream rose an eyebrow but felt relieved, "That' good I-"

Someone yanked Dream back by the hood of his hoodie and Dream choked on his sentence. He glared at the pillager that stood behind him angrily, "Stop acting like imbeciles."

"You didn't have to do that to him," Sapnap said angrily, his hands curled into fists. Wilbur shot

Sapnap a look when the pillagers glared at him.

"If you were paying attention we wouldn't have to," Another pillager replied before gesturing to a cart full of weapons, "Now, equip yourselves and don't you *dare* try anything."

Dream's eyebrow twitched as anger flared inside him as the pillagers glanced at him at that last. Sapnap rose an eyebrow but said nothing, coming to stand beside Dream so close that their arms were almost touching, "What's their problem?"

"I don't know...they hate me I guess," Dream muttered and Sapnap snorted, his eyes lit with dark amusement.

"We have that in common," He muttered and Dream glanced at him, "Just ignore them. You'll get used to it."

Dream nodded and watched as Nikki, Antfrost, and Karl chose diamond swords and shields. Wilbur and Sapnap chose the same. Dream stepped up to the cart and didn't even look at the pillagers as he also chose a shield and then picked up a diamond axe.

They were led out of the nether fortress after that and Nikki spoke up shyly, "I-I'll try my best guys but I'm not the best at this kind of thing..."

"Me either," Karl added, smiling at Nikki, "But Sapnap is great and I haven't see Wilbur fight yet."

"I'm okay," Wilbur shrugged as Antfrost nodded in agreement, "I have a sense that Sapnap and Dream are going to dominate though."

Dream snorted and Sapnap smirked a little, but he looked over at Dream curiously and Dream grinned as he offered, "Whoever takes out the most Endermen gets bragging rights?"

Sapnap's entire face lit up from nostalgia and the challenge, "Hell yeah. You're *on*!"

When they made it to the warped forest area, Dream looked around at all the Endermen, feeling a bit on edge that he wasn't wearing his mask. It just felt all wrong to not have it on while he was fighting.

"Get going. We'll be watching you," One of the pillagers ordered, his eyes narrowing on Sapnap. Dream glared at them hatefully but turned around, doing his best to ignore his shaking hands.

"George tells me that you have some mad skills," Sapnap grinned as he stood by his side again. Dream's mouth twitched into a small smirk as he thought about George bragging about him. Did he really...? "So you should go first."

"Fine by me," Dream shrugged and immediately jogged off, looking directly at an Endermen.

Dream fought Endermen before, not as much as the other mobs in the overworld, so he was prepared when the Endermen teleported around. Dream felt eyes on him when he killed the Endermen easily. He turned, smirking at a shocked Sapnap before Sapnap laughed and smirked right back, wiggling his eyebrows playfully before he, too, ran off to fight an Endermen.

Then Dream noticed the stares of some of the pillagers. He felt inwardly pleased when he saw some of them looked tense while some were staring at him in almost disbelief and wariness. He turned, smirking as he watched Sapnap kill an Endermen that teleported behind him with ease.

"You guys are insane, *actually*," Karl spoke up with disbelief and Dream wheezed, grinning behind him where Nikki stood with her mouth wide open while Wilbur and Antfrost were watching them with amusement.

"I guess we better get a move on too," Wilbur sighed and walked off. Karl and Nikki hesitated before following him. Antfrost just silently followed after giving Dream one last look.

Dream turned back and leapt back into action, showing off his skills where he could. He heard Sapnap occasionally teasing him for being a show-off and despite their situation, Dream felt warmth in his chest. Sapnap really hadn't changed all that much.

For the next few minutes they continued trying to one-up each other and they only stopped when they heard Wilbur calling for help. Dream immediately rushed over to see Nikki and Karl trying to fend off two Endermen that Wilbur and Ant were trying to kill but they kept teleporting around them.

Dream and Sapnap both helped Wilbur and Ant eventually kill them. Karl let out a dramatic sigh of relief while Nikki thanked them for their help. Nikki glanced worriedly at the angry pillagers around them, "So far no pearls....the pillagers seem more pent up with anger today than usual."

"They're also pretty wary of Dream," Sapnap grinned, slapping Dream's arm and causing him to laugh, "My buddy looks pretty deadly out there and now they're afraid of him."

"I second that," Karl laughed out, "I'd be scared too...this guy isn't even using a *sword*!"

"Sometimes axes are better," Dream shrugged, grinning at Karl, "They're lighter than swords."

"Haven't thought of it that way before," Ant said, looking surprised as he eyed Dream's axe, "I might have to try it sometime."

"But for now we should get back to fighting," Wilbur warned, looking at the pillagers warily, "Nikki's right....they are more pent up with anger today. Let's not make things worse."

"Right," Sapnap huffed, glaring at the ground, "Let's get this over with then..."

Dream followed Sapnap around as they looked for more Endermen to kill. As they found one, they

both looked at it at the same time and gasped when it came for them both. Sapnap immediately blocked a hit and swung his sword at the Endermen. Just before it tried to teleport, Dream chopped it's head off with a clean sweep, stunning Sapnap, "*Jesus* dude...."

"Even Endermen can't live without their heads," Dream joked darkly and Sapnap rolled his eyes, "I'm at four Endermen kills by the way. You're at three."

"*What?!* You can't claim this one when we both hit it!" Sapnap argued and Dream blinked at him, surprised that he was arguing with him. Dream wheezed.

"But *I* cut off it's head," Dream argued back playfully.

"Are you guys being *serious* right now? You sound like psychopaths!" Karl commented incredulously and they both turned to see the others had gotten closer to them as they fought. Nikki giggled.

"That axe sweep was incredible though," Wilbur whistled and Dream grinned.

"Thanks."

"Get moving! You're not done yet!" One pillager screamed suddenly. Both Karl and Nikki jumped while Sapnap's eyes darkened in a glare and Dream frowned in their direction.

Dream shook his head and turned, leaping off the small incline they were on to look at and battle another Endermen. The others began fighting again and they continued to try and fight Endermen for the next thirty or so minutes. Dream couldn't really tell. He just knew that his arms were beginning to ache. He glanced over to see Nikki struggling to hold a shield up but Karl managed to help Wilbur kill the one that was bearing down on her.

After the last one died, Dream looked at Sapnap. He seemed to be getting a little tired as well and Dream turned to glance at the pillagers. They appeared to be talking amongst themselves and then they seemed to be almost angrier than before. Then he realized that was probably due to the fact that not a *single* Endermen dropped a pearl. In a way, Dream felt victorious.

"Follow," One pillager eventually ordered, "It is time to head back."

"Thank God," Karl sighed lowly, rolling one of his arms, "I don't think I had any fight left in me."

Sapnap quickly jogged to walk by Dream's side and they shared a grin, "Nice work out there. George wasn't lying when he said you're good at fighting. I'm not surprised though."

"Really?" Dream laughed, feeling a bit happy at that, "You're pretty awesome yourself! You've gotten so much better."

"Well it was either that or die," Sapnap joked but Dream detected the tenseness of the joke and his smile fell. Dream frowned, glancing over at Sapnap hesitantly, "Anyway, what's up with you and George?"

Dream rose an eyebrow, feeling lost, "What do you mean?"

"I don't know exactly but when George talks about you he gets kinda blush-y and sometimes he gets defensive," Sapnap shrugged, eyeing Dream out of the corner of his eye. Dream blinked. George gets defensive? "Never mind...."

"George blushes easily," Dream commented, looking at Sapnap in confusion. Sapnap looked at

him and snickered.

"I noticed. I was just wondering-"

Sapnap was cut off when a growl filled the air. Dream and Sapnap both tensed and looked around for the source until they noticed a few hostile-looking pillagers arguing about sending them back out to fight versus bringing them back to the fortress. Sapnap sighed, "Today's one of those days where they aren't patient."

Dream said nothing, wondering why he felt a growing sense of anxiety. They made it back to the fortress and the pillagers stopped arguing enough to start ordering them around again, "Lay your weapons down on the rack and step back."

Wilbur and Antfrost immediately did so followed by Karl and Nikki. They were whispering amongst each other and Dream couldn't tell what they were talking about. Based off their calm faces, it wasn't anything bad, probably just chatter. Dream discarded his axe and shield when a pillager glared at him. Then Sapnap stepped from his side to do the same.

As Sapnap went to lay down his sword and shield, a foot struck out and forced him to fall to the ground with a harsh thud. Dream's eyes widened and he heard Ant and Nikki gasp. Sapnap glared over his shoulder, "Really? You're gonna be childish now?"

The pillager that apparently tripped him glared back at him, his eyes flashing. He jerked his foot out and kicked Sapnap in the stomach. Sapnap gasped and groaned out in pain. Dream immediately growled and barked out, "Hey! Stop! It wasn't his fault that you forced him to fall!"

Another pillager shot him a dirty look, "Stay out of this or we'll get you too."

The pillager that kicked Sapnap smirked smugly when Sapnap glared up at him, "You guys think you're so tough and can do whatever you want just because you're skilled at fighting!"

The pillager kicked Sapnap right in the rib and he cried out in pain. Nikki gasped, "Wait! Please stop!"

"He didn't do anything wrong!" Karl pleaded, his face white with fear. Wilbur and Antfrost looked stunned in place at what was suddenly happening.

Dream saw red and acted before he realized what he was doing. He pushed past the pillager that warned him along with two others and put all his strength into his shoulder to slam the pillager that was hurting Sapnap away from him. The pillager stumbled backwards quickly and tripped over the little ledge of the fortress before falling over with a sharp panicked shout.

Everything that happened after that was something out of a nightmare.

Sapnap's eyes slowly went wide and the rest of the pillagers all froze or tensed in shock. Wilbur and Antfrost paled while Nikki gasped harshly, a hand over her mouth. Dream blinked at where the pillager disappeared and felt a heat wave of panic wash over him as he realized what just happened.

He just accidentally pushed a pillager over the edge of the fortress and into the lava lake below. Dream killed him.

"Oh my God...no, no, *no*," Sapnap gasped out, panicking, "What did you just do?"

"It-It was an accident," Dream pleaded, his eyes going from Sapnap to one of the pillagers that finally turned to regard him.

"Restrain them!" He barked the order out harshly and it sounded like it hurt his throat. Dream and Sapnap struggled when several of the pillagers immediately leapt into action and grabbed them by their arms, holding them in place, "You killed him!"

"You actually *dared* to fight back and kill one of us," Another pillager growled and Dream felt like he was heavily sweating and desperately tried to keep the fear off his face. Sapnap, however, was already hyperventilating, his tan skin pale.

"Wait, *please*," Nikki pleaded and Dream looked to see her eyes wild with fear and her face pale as well, "H-He was just trying to stop that guy from really hurting Sapnap. He wasn't *trying* to kill him....please...."

"It wasn't his job to step in," The pillager told her cruelly and Dream bit back on the growl that tried to force its way out of his throat.

"H-He doesn't know the rules that well yet," Antfrost spoke on his behalf, his hands shaking.

"Well then I guess your fellow prisoners didn't do a good enough job of warning you," Another pillager spat out as he glared at Dream, "We warned you *multiple* times what would happen if you tried *anything*."

"What punishment should we give them?" Yet another pillager asked in an almost bored tone. Dream couldn't believe this was happening. Sapnap's head came up, his eyes still wide with panic.

"Sapnap didn't do anything!" Karl cried out and flinched when two of the pillagers turned to glare at him.

"He's right. Punish *me* if you have to but Sapnap didn't do anything," Dream added, surprised by how calm that came out. The two pillagers in front of Sapnap and Dream glared at him then.

"Oh but he *did*," One of the other pillagers muttered darkly but Dream couldn't focus on that because suddenly the two pillagers in front of them straightened and looked at each other.

"I know the perfect punishment," The one in front of Dream grinned wickedly and Dream's heart fell into his feet. Then he turned to look behind him, "Some of you go get that small brunette boy in the left hall and take him to the sweatbox."

"*No!*" Sapnap gasped loudly, lunging forward just as Dream jolted from the sudden movement.

"Three days for him in the sweatbox then," The one in front of Sapnap grinned as he watched Sapnap's reaction like he was enjoying himself, "Yes that's a good punishment."

"No! *No!* Just punish me! Just throw *me* in there, I can handle it again!" Sapnap pleaded and Dream's eyes widened at how desperate he sounded. Dream felt like he was experiencing all this from very far away.

He could tell that Antfrost and Karl were saying something in a begging tone as well while Wilbur attempted to console a crying Nikki while he looked at Dream wildly. Sapnap struggled anew when several pillagers left, "No! *Please!* He won't survive three days! Just punish us!"

"We *are* punishing you," The one in front of Dream answered with a cruel smile, "And if he dies in the sweatbox then that'll be on both of you."

Dream snapped out of his shock then and growled, lunging forward but not getting anywhere, "Don't do this. You'll regret it!"

"Look at who's still trying to act like they're a big shot?" The one in front of Dream scoffed, his eyes lit with rage and Dream gasped in pain when he was punched in the stomach, "Haven't you and this one learned by now that *we're* in charge?"

"I already know that. I've known that since *last* time," Sapnap commented, his breath coming and going in small pants as he continued to panic, "Please choose something else, *anything* else."

"Shut up," The one in front of Sapnap growled and Sapnap flinched. Dream felt the rage growing in his chest at the look on Sapnap's face. He'd never seen anyone more terrified than how Sapnap looked now. Just what was the sweatbox?

"Alright now that *that's* settled," Another pillager sighed like they were tired and Dream never felt like killing anyone more, "Let's get the rest of them back to their cells."

"Wait, please, reconsider!" Karl begged but gasped when he was pushed forward. Sapnap lunged again and was rewarded with a slap to the face. Dream growled.

"You're going to fucking regret this! You have *no* idea," Dream warned them, feeling almost wild and out of place with how angry he was, "You hurt them and you'll answer to me."

"I'm *so* scared," The one in front of Dream taunted but his eyes shined with anger, "Don't make us throw in that other brunette here and your black-clad friend."

Sapnap and Dream both froze as Karl gasped at being included suddenly. Dream felt a shiver wash over him as he realized that there was nothing he could do to stop this unless he just wanted to hurt more people due to his actions. His eyes burned a little but he *refused* to show tears of any kind in front of them.

Wilbur and Nikki were pushed away and the two pillagers holding both Sapnap and Dream began to forced them apart and down the stairs. Dream felt endless waves of rage and self-hatred coursing through him.

George....

"So compared to Karl you've only been here for 8 months?" George asked as he tilted his head at Quackity. They'd been swapping stories to keep their mind off their missing friends.

Quackity nodded, "Yeah I was captured 8 months ago....my family didn't make it during the attack either...."

"I-I'm sorry," George wilted and Quackity gave him a weak smile, shrugging one shoulder.

"They didn't suffer and for that I'm thankful, you know?" Quackity replied and George nodded, his chest aching. They both jumped when they heard distant shouting. It was too distant to pick up, "What the hell?"

George's previous anxiety returned tenfold. Did something happen? Are the others back yet? Did something happen while they were out? What if Sapnap was hurt? George found himself breathing quicker and took a deep breath to calm himself. He was being a little too anxious.

A couple of tense quiet minutes later passed before George heard stomping and his heart stuttered in his chest. Several pissed-looking pillagers came stomping down the stairs and Quackity gasped. They both shared a look of fear when they noticed a lack of Sapnap or Karl. The pillagers pinned their gaze on George and he paled, freezing with fear.

What was going on?

The pillagers opened his cell door and George took a couple of steps back. One of them sneered angrily at him, "Come. You're being punished due to your friends' complete lack of common sense."

"*What?!?*" Georgie cried at the same time Quackity yelled, "Wait what?!?"

George gasped as he was grabbed by two pillagers. They were grabbing his upper arms so tight that George winced, sure it was going to leave bruises. He began panicking as they dragged him away. Quackity yelled hysterically, "*George!!*"

"W-What happened?" George asked, struggling slightly in his panic. The pillagers were not amused and jerked him forward. He cried out at the pain in his arms when they did so.

"The unmasked man and your cellmate decided to fight against us. The unmasked man killed one of our allies," One of the pillagers explained as they pulled him up the steps to the platform before dragging him to the back. George's eyes widened at what he just heard.

"*What...?*" He trailed off brokenly. Dream killed one of them? Why? There's no way Dream would just do that knowing someone could get punished if he did. George realized he was being pulled down more steps and towards a hallway on the right. George's breath hitched.

"W-Where are we going?!?" He asked hysterically, remembering Sapnap's earlier story.

"Your punishment includes three days in the sweatbox due to the unmasked man," One of the pillagers told him with a scowl. George gasped and his eyes widened as panic rushed through his veins. He remembered how Sapnap described the room just earlier that day. This *couldn't* be happening.

George was led down to a long staircase that Sapnap described and George could already feel the heat rising as they descended further down. One of the pillagers spoke up, "You know I feel bad for you, having such a reckless and thoughtless friend."

George bit his lip until he tasted blood because one, he *hated* that they were talking about Dream this way and two, he was super confused about what the circumstances were and three, he was terrified. The pillager continued, "It was nice taking him down a few pegs."

They made it all the way down and George swallowed heavily, his entire body shaking as he eyed the iron door that had three different latches on it to keep it locked. A pillager began unlocking it and George tried to steady his panting into normal breaths but he struggled. Once the door was open George gasped loudly as they walked forward and literally threw him inside before latching it behind him.

The entire thing was made from nether brick and nothing else. There was nothing in the room save for a iron bucket and frustrated tears filled George's eyes. He turned to the latched iron door and took a deep breath, trying to quell the nausea he felt building. He jumped when a pillager spoke to him, "You know what's fucked up? We made him chose. It was either *you* or your cellmate. He chose you over your cellmate in a heartbeat. We were all pretty surprised."

George's eyes widened as he froze. Dream chose for him to come here? Well, if that were *really* true then George didn't blame him. Sapnap had already suffered this once and George just promised him he wouldn't have to again. If that was the case, George was glad to be in here instead of Sapnap. He glared at the door. They said that was fucked up? What they're doing now is more

fucked up.

"Oh well, enjoy your three days alone. Good luck," The pillager laughed cruelly and George heard footsteps walking away. He let out a breath and slid down the wall to sit on the floor.

It was hot, Sapnap wasn't kidding. He could already feel himself sweating. George quickly took off his hoodie and bunched it behind him. He took off his shoes and socks. He could do this. He could survive three days....

But could he *really*? Sapnap said he barely survived two days and he's built better than George. George gulped and shook his head, watching his hands shake. The heat was making him still feel nauseous and George put his head on his knees to stabilize himself. He desperately wished he wasn't by himself right now.

He hoped the others could escape soon. George was so tired of all this endless crap they were going through. He blinked into his knees when he remembered when Bad claimed all their good luck was leading to something terrible. Turns out he wasn't kidding, huh....

George hugged his knees tight, refusing the tears that wanted to build up in his eyes. Tears would only dehydrate him faster.

George could do this. He *would* do this. He could hold out. Hopefully he wouldn't have to though. George fervently hoped that Techno hurried up and found them here so that they could escape.

A sudden thought hit George then. The pillagers said that he was being punished for what Dream and Sapnap did...regardless of what was the truth and what wasn't, George froze when he realized how Sapnap and Dream must be feeling right now. George's breath quickened and he pressed his face closer to his knees, biting back more tears.

What had they done to deserve this?

Chapter End Notes

Poor Gogy, Sapnap, and Dream!!! Those lying, cruel pillagers are so doomed by the wrath that's coming to them, Dream's not kidding guys.

Anyways, thank you all for your continued support and, as always, let me know in the comments if you are confused about anything!

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Dream decides he can't wait for Techno to help them out and makes plans to fight back.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Sorry this update took me a little longer than usual. I've been dealing with some personal things and I needed it to be done before I could focus on writing! I hope I didn't make you too impatient, haha! 😊

Also thank you so much! This story officially hit 10,000 hits and now it is at 115 bookmarks and 500 kudos! Thank you all for your numerous support for my story!!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The silence was so heavy in the air that it threatened to choke Dream as he was harshly tugged and pushed down the steps towards the center hall. It felt like his ears were ringing and he had a hard time focusing on anything other than how awful he felt. He was so enraged that his body was shaking and yet he clung to the rational that if he fought back others would be hurt just like George; Dream was sure he couldn't handle that.

Besides being enraged, Dream had never felt such hatred towards himself as he did in that moment. He'd only wanted to stop that pillager from hurting Sapnap, he wasn't trying to kill him. Sapnap was a tough guy, obviously, so why couldn't Dream just hold in his anger and rage like everyone else seemed able to do?

"Dream!"

Dream flinched a little but couldn't bear to lift his head to look Skeppy in the eyes. He sounded so worried and while Dream thought of Skeppy as a growing friend, he was still somewhat surprised by how quickly he was accepted by the others. Dream clenched his teeth together to ground himself when the pillagers unlocked his cell door and pushed him inside.

He landed on the ground on his hands and knees and shifted so that he was sitting up, staring at the wall. A cruel voice spoke up harshly, "Maybe *now* you'll know your place."

Dream whipped his head around to glare hatefully at the pillager. He had no idea what he looked like, but the two pillagers there stepped backwards, their eyes wide. A look of fear flashed through

their faces before the pillager that spoke glared at him, "What a freak..."

Dream glared at them until they left and then jumped when Fundy near shouted, "What was that about?! We heard a bunch of yelling earlier but couldn't make out anything and then *this* happens!"

There was an awkward pause and Dream assumed it was because they were waiting for him to speak. Dream's tongue felt heavy in his mouth and he shifted his eyes to the wall, avoiding their stares.

"I'll tell you..." Wilbur spoke up quietly and Dream had all but forgotten about him until that point.

Dream tuned out as Wilbur began to fill in Skeppy and Fundy on everything that happened while they were out. He sat back against the wall heavily, curled his knees up, and placed his face in his hands, wishing for his mask fervently.

George....George didn't deserve to be hurt just because Dream couldn't hold himself back for even *one* goddamn moment. Dream snarled into his hands, feeling waves of endless frustration towards things too numerous to count.

He tuned back in to his cellmates' conversation unwillingly when Skeppy started shouting, "What?! They threatened Bad too?!"

"Calm down Skeppy its-"

"I can't calm down Fundy! They threw George in the *sweatbox* and now they're even more worked up! What if they hurt Bad?!" Skeppy said loudly, his voice pinched with worry.

"I don't think they will. Those bastards seemed way too thrilled by Dream and Sapnap's reactions," Wilbur sighed and Dream scowled further into his hands at that, almost digging his fingernails into his face, "But there's one piece of good news. I didn't get to share it before...."

"What?" Fundy questioned and Dream peered over at Wilbur, taking his hands away from his face. What in the hell was Wilbur talking about?

"During the fights we had with the Endermen, I cut off a piece of my trench coat to leave behind for Techno or Phil to find," Wilbur explained as he gestured to the brown button-up trench coat he wore. Dream's eyes slowly widened a bit, feeling pinpricks of hope beginning to form in his chest.

"Whoa! That's a good idea," Fundy grinned, his face brightening, "Nice going Wil!"

"Thank you..." Wilbur grinned back and Dream thought of George again.

"Will they come before three days?" Dream asked slowly, his voice low. It startled the other three as they stared at him. Dream must have looked awful or extremely pissed off still because Wilbur flinched when their eyes met.

"I....I really don't know Dream. I think it might be a few days....," Wilbur gulped, looking nervous. Dream's previous hope dropped to his feet and he growled, standing quickly before punching the nether brick wall with his fist so hard that he winced.

"Drea-"

"George doesn't have a few days!" Dream shouted, glaring over at Wilbur, "We can't wait for Techno to get here anymore we have to get out!"

"Wait a second Dream just calm down," Skeppy gasped as he stepped forward and when Dream looked at him, he froze, "Ge-George is stronger than you think he is both mentally *and* physically. I don't think even he knows how strong he really is..."

Dream made a face that felt torn between desperation and sadness, "But Sapnap acted like.....he was....Sapnap said he was there before and he doesn't think George will survive!"

Skeppy's eyes widened and he looked both shocked and confused, "What...? Sapnap never mentioned anything like that...."

"He's been in there before," Fundy spoke up and they all looked at him in surprise. Fundy was glaring at the floor, "I only heard the story from Karl and he heard it directly from Sapnap...."

Dream's knees shook, "So he has been in the sweatbox before...? What is it exactly?"

"It's a room that's built way down below the fortress. It hovers over the lava lake enough to make you sweat when you're in the room but not too hot that you die too quickly," Fundy explained as his lips curled in disgust, "It's cruel and Sapnap once got punished for destroying the pillagers supplies and had to stay in there for two whole days."

Dream sat down heavily on the ground and thought back on the desperation on Sapnap's face when the pillagers announced George would be punished. No wonder he was so freaked out. Calm rage bloomed in Dream's chest and he spat out, "There's no way they're getting away with this...."

"Yeah..." Skeppy frowned, watching Dream, who brought his knees to his chest and shoved his face into his knees again.

Things went silent and Dream couldn't stop thinking of ways to get revenge. Just killing the

pillagers for everything they've done seemed too lenient. Should he just lock them away in the cages like they did to the others and leave them to die of exposure? Or should he lock them in the sweatbox the way they did to Sapnap and George?

Dream pictured it for a moment and felt a dark twist of satisfaction in his chest until he thought about George again. George, who was alone in a room suspended above a lava lake. Dream's chest ached with longing. What he wouldn't give to just go rescue him and hold him, "We can't wait for Techno to come help us..."

The others blinked out of their own dazes and Wilbur looked wary, "What do you want Dream? I'm sorry I can't predict when my family will be here."

"We need to escape on our own within the next two days," Dream muttered and Fundy gasped, obviously surprised. Wilbur and Skeppy's eyes widened.

"We can't do that!" Skeppy cried out and flinched when Dream pulled his face from his knees to glare at him, "Look, I'm sorry about George but its impossible to break all of us prisoners out without someone getting killed!"

Frustration bled into Dream's face, "So we do nothing and let George slowly die?!"

"No but we can't just make reckless attempts to escape when Bad's and everyone's life is on the line!" Skeppy's voice increased into a shout as he also looked frustrated.

"If everyone would just *get* on board and not be controlled by *fear* then we could have the advantage on them!" Dream growled and Skeppy felt his last bit of patience snap.

"Can't you understand by now why we're afraid? We don't want to lose anyone else!" Skeppy said coldly, "I'm not going to endanger Bad's or anyone else's life for a reckless escape attempt just because *you* can't trust George to survive on his own."

Dream's eyes widened in his glare and he snarled, standing so abruptly that Fundy jumped. Wilbur stood there stunned and he watched them both. Skeppy broke out into a sweat due to the intimidation he felt from Dream but kept his cold stare. He was serious.

"Okay, wait, calm down!" Fundy gasped out, looking panicked, "I think you're both right!"

"What?!" Both Dream and Skeppy demanded simultaneously. Fundy jumped again and was surprised when Wilbur put a steady hand on his back.

"Skeppy's right that we can't be reckless about *any* escape plan," Fundy swallowed, looking at them seriously, "We'd have to be 100% sure that we could pull it off without losing anyone. And

Dream's also right....we can't wait any longer. I don't know about you, Skeppy, but I don't want George to die to these psychopaths."

"Of course I don't want him to die!" Skeppy frowned, his hands curling into fists, "I just...I *just* found Bad again and we haven't even gotten to *see* each other yet! Who's to say that things don't go wrong and what happened to George happens to Bad?!"

Dream leaned back, his eyes widened at the tears that were suddenly shining in Skeppy's eyes. The growing rage Dream felt began dissipating slightly as he thought of Bad, his friend and his rock that always listened to his worries about George. Dream swallowed heavily, "I don't want anything to happen to Bad either...which is why we need to get the hell outta here."

"I second that," Wilbur grinned and Fundy sighed in relief. Skeppy rubbed his eyes, sighing.

"Look, for right now, let's calm down and take our time discussing possible ideas okay?" Fundy spoke up, smiling weakly, "I haven't met him yet, but George doesn't sound like the guy that'll just give up and he doesn't sound weak. So...try to keep a level head, okay Dream?"

Dream inhaled sharply and then exhaled, sitting calmly on the floor, "I'll try my best...."

"George was *what?!?!?*" Bad cried, tears pooling into his green eyes and Nikki sniffed, nodding to affirm what Antfrost told them, "And it's a room suspended over a lava lake?! Oh my gosh, he'll die!"

"It's possible for him to survive, I think," Ant told him, trying to cheer up the normally positive male, "George seemed pretty healthy so it's possible."

"&*@#*0...."

Antfrost, Nikki, and Bad all jumped at the sudden senseless rambling they heard. Nikki's eyes widened when she glanced at her cellmate pacing around, a look of panic on his face. Ranboo seemed absolutely devastated by the news that George was put in the sweatbox.

"What....Ranboo?" Bad called out uncertainly, shocked by the weird noises Ranboo was making. It almost sounded like Endermen noises. Ranboo was breathing quickly, "Is he alright?"

"This happens when he gets stressed," Nikki explained, wiping her eyes and standing, hands out to try and comfort Ranboo, "Ranboo....Ranboo stop a minute and talk to us, okay?"

Ranboo seemed to shrink in on himself the longer they stared at him so Antfrost quickly looked away and urged Bad to do the same by whispering, "He doesn't like to be stared at..."

"Oh sorry," Bad trailed off, looking at the ground. His heart was beating out of his chest. He'd yet to leave the cell since he was put in here and all he's been able to do is hear the stories of his friends. And now after learning what happened with Dream, George, and Sapnap....Bad felt a sense of anger.

From what it sounded like, Dream was just defending Sapnap. Why did the pillagers have to be so cruel?! Bad frowned, feeling tears in his eyes again. He just wants to see his friends again.....to see Skeppy...

"S-....Sorry," Ranboo breathed out and they looked up at him again. Nikki stepped away to give him space, "I kind of....freaked out. Sorry.."

"It's okay Ranboo. We understand," Nikki smiled warmly and Ranboo wrapped his arms around himself, his tall body hunched forward a little.

"We have to get out of here," Ranboo rambled as he stared at the ground in distress, "We have to help George...."

"How can we though?" Antfrost frowned as he also curled into himself, "There's so many of them and not enough of *us* that can reasonably fight. I thought that Techno guy was gonna come help Wilbur..."

"We don't know when that is though from what you guys have told me," Bad said seriously, "George might not have that kind of time...."

"I can get us out of here but..." Ranboo stopped speaking and winced, "It won't be easy and it'll take time we don't have. I'll be discovered and we'll be punished..."

"Ranboo....can I ask about that...you say you can get us out but how?" Nikki asked gently, "I know you said you have an ability you didn't want the pillagers to figure out..."

"Yes I...its kind of hard to explain," Ranboo sighed, closing his differently colored eyes, "Have you guys heard of the silk touch enchantment?"

"Yes," Bad nodded immediately and Nikki giggled before nodding as well.

"Most people know if they're taught in a school," Ant smiled in a confused way, "Why are you bringing that enchantment up? It's super rare..."

Ranboo nodded slowly, "I have a power that's kind of similar to that enchantment..."

"What?" Bad gasped, his eyes lighting up, "How is that possible? A silk touch enchantment is an enchantment put on pickaxes that retain the perfect shape of anything it mines. It's super helpful when mining for ores and building supplies."

"I can do it with my hands though it takes longer than with a pickaxe," Ranboo admitted and the three were stupefied for a moment.

"I'm sorry....did you just say you could mine with your *hands*?" Antfrost asked, pointing a shaky finger at him in disbelief.

"Uh...mining probably isn't the right word," Ranboo shuffled awkwardly as he stared at his hands, "I'm a bit stronger than the average human so I can dig and pull things into the perfect shape when I want to, kind of like a silk touch enchantment....I told you its hard to explain."

Nikki's eyes widened at a revelation she had, "Like an Endermen...."

The room grew quiet and after a moment of hesitation Ranboo nodded. Bad's eyes widened and his heart skipped a beat, "That's amazing..."

"Yeah it is...but how would that help us escape?" Antfrost asked hesitantly, "Could you break the bars if you're strong or something?"

"No...I was thinking more like...." Ranboo trailed off squatting in front of the cell door and patting the nether brick flooring. Antfrost's eyes widened and Nikki gasped.

"You'd be able to dig out a hole in the floor?" Nikki gasped out, "How does it not hurt your hands to do that?"

"I have thick skin and...." Ranboo blinked for a moment, "My hands are just made strong? I think?"

Nikki blinked back, "Oh....okay..."

"Wait so you can for sure dig a hole out and be able to get the rest of us out too?" Bad asked, his eyes still wide, "Because if it takes long then there's no way you can dig a hole for every cell."

"That's what I've been saying...." Ranboo sighed sadly and then he looked hesitant, "But...I could get myself out and then break the locks. I know how to break locks....but that'd still take a good bit of time to break the lock on *everyone's* cell."

"True...but way faster than trying to dig with your hands," Antfrost said with a small smile, "That still sounds impossible by the way..."

"We need to let everyone know what Ranboo can do and set up a time for him to do it," Bad frowned and Ranboo suddenly looked stressed again, "Is that alright with you, Ranboo? You'd be helping us out a lot."

"I...I don't mind. I *want* to help everyone," Ranboo smiled hesitantly, "But the others need to know and be ready because.....because I don't want anyone to die because of me."

Nikki, Antfrost, and Bad all shared an understanding look. They wouldn't want to have that pressure either. Antfrost smiled, "We'll tell the others to spread the word tomorrow, whoever get's chosen...."

That was the plan, however, the next day came and went with no sign of the pillagers. That had *never* happened before. Antfrost and Nikki were floored. The pillagers didn't even show up with food or water like they normally did, which riled up the fear in the other random prisoners.

Ranboo grew more distressed as well, "Why haven't they come?! They didn't show themselves at all yesterday!"

"You don't think this is a punishment do you?" Nikki asked, looking pale as she held her shaking hands together, "They were pretty mad about Dream and Sapnap..."

"But they've never withheld food or water. They need us to be strong enough to fight for them," Antfrost said with disbelief in his tone, "Maybe something else is going on?"

"I hope it's not about Dream again..." Bad spoke up anxiously, his hands held tightly together like he was praying. Antfrost frowned sadly at him, "What do we do...? We can't spread the word of Ranboo's plan like this...."

"I don't know...." Antfrost sighed, crossing his arms over his knees and resting his chin on them, "Poor George has already been in there a day now...and we basically can't do anything...."

"If only they'd just come," Ranboo frowned, glaring down the hallway, "Then we could spread the word and get everyone ready by tomorrow. If we could just spread the word today somehow..."

"Yeah....it's already morning and still no sign of them..." Nikki sighed as well, curling her arms around her rumbling stomach, "I'm hungry...."

A few hours passed and the others were getting restless. There was still no sign of the pillagers. What were they doing? Was this really a punishment? The more Bad thought about it, the more panicked he became. He really wished he could see Dream because he couldn't help but worry that something else might have happened to him.

"This is fucking *ridiculous*!" Antfrost cursed, his face contorting in pain as he curled into himself. His stomach was clenching around nothing. They'd not eaten yesterday and it was already morning but the pillagers still weren't showing, which meant they would have no breakfast unless they did.

"Language Ant!" Bad gasped, but he looked at him sympathetically, "I'm sure we're just overthinking things..."

"They've never missed feeding us. Not once Bad," Ranboo said as he hugged himself tighter, his eyes pinched with stress, "Something's wrong..."

"What do we do?" Nikki asked softly, rubbing her arm, "If we wait too long...what will happen to us? To George?"

Ranboo tensed and glanced at her worriedly, "I-If things stay this way for too long I could just do my idea anyway even if it's a risk since the others won't be prepared...."

"I don't know..." Antfrost grumbled uncertainly under his breath.

It went silent for a few minutes and the silence was finally broken when they heard distant sounds of chattering. Bad's heart leapt in his throat with a strange sense of hope instead of fear. Were the pillagers finally showing themselves?

But that hope dissipated immediately when the pillagers did indeed appear coming down the steps, but they were pulling a young boy along with them. Bad heard Nikki and Ranboo gasp while Antfrost sucked in a breath in shock.

The young boy had beach-blond hair and sky blue eyes. His young boyish features were rounded and it was obvious he was still a child, a teen under 18 at best. Bad's heart clenched in his chest and his breath stuck in his throat.

They remained silent as they pushed the young boy into the cell beside Ranboo and Nikki's before throwing the usual water bottles and rice bowls in. Part of the rice spilled over from how carelessly they threw it. Antfrost glared but the pillagers didn't even look at them, like they were choosing to ignore their presence all together.

Bad was just thankful for any food or water. He pushed Ant's share towards him, capturing his attention, and then leaned back to look at the new boy, "Are you okay?"

The young boy was in the middle of looking around with a startling amount of calm awareness, like he was memorizing the surroundings. His sky blue eyes lit up and he actually smiled, "Yeah, I'm fine! Thanks for asking! Are *you* guys okay?"

"Uh..." Ant trailed off, stunned by the boy's cheerfulness despite just being thrown in a literal cell.

Nikki blinked, "We're okay....what's your name?"

"I'm Tubbo!" The boy smiled brightly, "What about you guys?"

"I-I'm Bad and that's Antfrost," Bad introduced his cellmate since Ant was too busy staring at the young boy incredulously. Tubbo giggled, snickering as he turned to Ranboo and Nikki.

"Oh...I'm Nikki and this is Ranboo," Nikki stuttered out as she studied the small boy. Tubbo's smiled immediately vanished as he got his first look at Ranboo. His eyes widened and Ranboo shifted his gaze away awkwardly.

"What the....you look awesome! How are your eyes and skin color two *different* colors?!" Tubbo asked, his eyes lighting up with pure amazement and curiosity. Ranboo's eyes widened at the unexpected positive response.

"Uh... I'm not sure," Ranboo said slowly, "Tubbo right? What happened out there? How did you get caught?"

Tubbo smiled glancing towards the hall for a moment before looking at them with more seriousness, "My friend and I got caught on purpose. We are part of a group that's going to rescue you! Maybe that'll be hard to believe but-"

Bad gasped, leaning forward immediately, "Are you talking about Techno?!"

Tubbo's eyes widened as he stared at Bad in surprise, "You know about him? Have you talked to Wilbur then?!"

"Yeah," Antfrost nodded and Tubbo looked insanely relieved, "Then are you a part of his family that he's been talking about?"

"Oh...w-well not really. I'm a friend of the family!" Tubbo replied, his shoulder's tense and they wondered why such a cheerful person tensed around such a question, "Anyways, Techno sent me and my friend here to get you guys ready for when he storms the place!"

"So he knows where we are?" Nikki asked with a growing hopeful smile on his face.

Tubbo smirked mischievously, "Yup! We tracked Wilbur this far and snuck around looking for signs of him. Then we found a piece of his clothes!"

Tubbo continued sheepishly before any of them could speak, "This is probably a lot to take in. Let me tell you a bit more...."

"This is crazy! It's been a day!" Skeppy cried out as he continued to pace around the cell. Fundy just watched him, unsure what to say to relieve his worries. Wilbur was quietly thinking and Dream....Dream was beginning to look more unstable with each hour that passed.

"Why haven't they shown themselves to choose someone?" Dream growled out as he glared intently down the hall, "Or brought some food? Are they just messing with me some more?"

"They wouldn't want us to get too weak though," Fundy finally spoke up, "It makes no sense to withhold food or water from us if they want us strong enough to fight for them."

"I can't wait much longer than this..." Dream trailed off, his lips tightening, "We have to help George! He's already been in that place for a day!"

"We talked about it though...even if we pick the locks somehow...it'd take so much time to help everyone else," Skeppy sighed, his shoulders slumping, "And we'd need *everyone* to stand a chance fighting back against them..."

Dream slumped over in defeat, hating the anxiousness he felt that made his fingers want to shake. He was so worried about George, "I know..."

The sound of distant struggling made them all go silent and whirl their heads around to stare at the staircase. Fundy gasped when a couple of pillagers came into view, dragging the figure of a tall boy. Dream was startled at the sight of a new prisoner. What in the hell happened?

The tall boy was kind of lanky, like he hadn't fully grown into his body yet. Dream was surprised to see how young the boy looked. He had a few freckles on his boyish face, his hair was sun-blond, his eyes ocean-blue in color, and he even had braces on his teeth, good lord.

As the pillagers dragged the boy further in, Dream caught movement in the corner of his eye and saw Wilbur stumble forward. His eyes widened when Wilbur's face paled, his mouth opening in shock as recognition flashed through his eyes before he quickly schooled his expression into a void one before the pillagers noticed.

"Yeah, you better run!" The boy shouted after the pillagers threw him in the cell beside Dream and Skeppy's. The pillagers ignored him and Dream heard Fundy let out a sigh of relief when they carelessly threw bottles of water in each of the cells along with bowls of rice. So they were feeding them after all...

"Don't say stuff like that! You could get us in trouble!" Fundy scolded the new boy, who turned to glare at him but as soon as he looked in that direction, his blue eyes widened like he was struck.

"*Wilbur!*" He gasped and Wilbur glanced down the hall to make sure the pillagers were gone before he turned to the boy with a glare.

"What the hell are you doing here Tommy?!" Wilbur demanded, looking both worried and pissed, "What *happened?*"

Dream straightened in shock and he heard Skeppy inhale sharply. This was Wilbur's little brother? Then if he's here....

"Techno sent me and Tubbo out," Tommy explained with a grin forming on his face, "We're here to prepare you guys for when he comes with the others."

"*What?*" Fundy gasped, his eyes widening. Wilbur rose an eyebrow in confusion.

"Tubbo's here too? Why would Techno...."

"Tubbo was carried off to the right hall or something," Tommy mumbled, looking put off by that fact, "But Techno sent us here to make sure you and the other people here are ready for when he attacks this place."

"So he's coming? *When* is he coming?!" Dream demanded, leaning closer. Tommy jumped before looking at him like he was first noticing him. He rose an eyebrow.

"Probably in two days or so," Tommy replied as he studied him and Dream felt his heart plummet. He slammed his fist on the ground, further startling everyone.

"That's not soon enough!" Dream growled and Tommy glared at him.

"Who the hell are *you*? You think it's easy taking on an entire fortress? Especially when we don't know much about this place?" Tommy ground out and Dream glared at him.

"Don't mind him," Wilbur spoke up and Dream snarled, glaring over at him. He didn't like Wilbur speaking on his behalf like he was a child. Wilbur glared back before focusing his gaze on Tommy, "His lover was locked up in a torture room of sorts and he might die if we don't get him out before two days..."

Tommy's glare disappeared immediately and his mouth fell open in shock, "Oh...well don't worry I'm sure we can save her!"

Dream could swear he heard Fundy snort but Dream hissed out, "It's a *he* and he's not my lover!"

"Yet," Fundy added and Dream glared at him. This was not the time for amusement!

Tommy's face wrinkled, not quite in disgust but like he tasted something sour, "Oh....well then...."

"We have to try and escape before two days," Dream repeated again with a frown, "I can't wait on Techno to come and I don't think I can hold back my recklessness anymore."

"*Dream...*" Skeppy warned and Dream turned his glare on him.

"I can't wait around when there's a high probability that George will die if I do nothing. George is not dying here and definitely not because of something *I* did," Dream growled out and his eyes narrowed, making Skeppy break out in a sweat from fear, "And you can say what you want, Skeppy, but you'd be the same as me if it were Bad in the sweatbox."

Skeppy's eyes widened and Tommy asked with a brow raised, "Sweatbox?"

"It's a room here," Fundy explained quietly, looking at the ground, "Built onto the fortress above a lava lake..."

Tommy's eyes lit up in understanding and he frowned, "Oh jeez...what a bunch of psychopaths..."

"I still can't believe Techno sent two children here," Wilbur sighed, placing a hand on his face.

"I'm not a child!" Tommy shouted, glaring at Wilbur, "And I can handle myself just fine! We're here to help you!"

"Well the more people the better," Skeppy said, shrugging his shoulder.

"And I agree with this green boy here!" Tommy pointed at Dream who rose a eyebrow at him.

"Boy?" Dream asked tensely and Tommy rolled his eyes, grinning.

"Green man then. We can try to escape tomorrow! How's that?" Tommy asked with a growing smirk on his face. Fundy and Skeppy looked at him like he had grown a horn on his head and Dream's eyes widened in shock.

"Tommy, you...." Wilbur's eye twitched in annoyance and he seemed physically incapable of expressing his exasperation.

"What? We can find a way out of the cells and break everyone out. Then BAM! We fight and kill those annoying fucks off!" Tommy grinned brightly and Dream let out a few chuckles of disbelief. And people thought *he* was reckless.

"I like the sound of that," Dream muttered darkly and Tommy's eyes widened, "But we have to be a bit more careful than that. If we're caught they won't hesitate to hurt someone."

"They notice things too....like who's closest to who," Fundy added just as darkly, his eyes showing his seriousness, "So they'd probably punish that guy that came with you if we're caught."

Tommy's shoulders tensed immediately, "Then we'll make sure *not* to fail."

Dream felt himself admiring his confidence a little but then George's face flashed through his mind and he suddenly felt nauseous. No....overconfidence leads to disaster. And that won't happen again.

Then Dream remembered Ranboo and how the others described him. Dream's eyes widened as he remembered them saying he might have a connection to Endermen and that he was hiding abilities from the pillagers, "Ranboo...."

The others turned to him in surprise and in Tommy's case, confusion, before Skeppy's eyes widened, "Right....Ranboo might be able to break us out of the cells. He said he could but I'm not entirely sure what he meant by that...."

"We need a way to talk to him..." Wilbur frowned as he glanced down the hall again, "But we're not even sure if they'll be choosing anyone today...though they haven't missed a day before..."

"Wait, who's Ranboo? And what do you mean?" Tommy asked in confusion. The others quickly filled him in while Dream ignored that and focused on the lock to their cells, studying it. It wasn't impossible to pick but the problem was they had nothing to pick it with...

"T-That's amazing!" Tommy commented, his eyes wide, "There's actually a person like that?!"

"Yeah...Tubbo's in the same hall with him so they probably already met," Wilbur said with a smile forming on his face, "If we really are going crazy and trying to break out tomorrow then the others need to know as well."

"So we need to spread the word for sure," Fundy sighed, "But what if they don't choose a group today? Even then...they'll probably be monitoring us even closer than before after what happened. We probably couldn't have this conversation in detail with any of the others then..."

"You're right...." Skeppy groaned, "But if we wait....ugh...."

"If only we had a way to pick the locks," Dream muttered angrily, still studying the lock like it spit at him. Tommy looked around his cell to see if he could find anything useful but he came up empty.

Then he remembered something and gasped, earning the others' attention as he began digging frantically in the pockets of his jeans. Wilbur rose an eyebrow at him, "Tommy?"

"I have bobby pins! I forgot all about them!" Tommy said with a big smug grin on his face as he pulled out two bobby pins from his back pocket.

"Oh my God!" Skeppy gasped, his eyes lighting up. Dream felt a sense of hope coming to strangle him again and he felt a grin forming on his own face.

"Wait...why do you have oddly convenient bobby pins?" Fundy asked with a wide-eyed incredulous look on his face.

Tommy's grin fell slightly and he looked a tad bit embarrassed, "Tubbo talked me into letting him put bobby pins in my hair to see what it looked like but that...that was the other night! We were just playing around!"

Wilbur threw his head back and laughed loudly as Tommy scowled, turning red in embarrassment, "Good going Tubbo!"

"That is great but..." Skeppy trailed off, his smile dimming in seriousness, "Those could easily break before we're able to get everyone out so..."

An idea formed in Dream's head, "What if I picked my out and went to talk to the others? I could sneak around and inform them of our ideas in detail that way they can be ready for sure."

Fundy's eyes lit up, "That sounds good but are you sure you can sneak around without getting caught?"

"It's what I've done most of my life," Dream answered seriously, his eyes darkening in a way that the others knew he wasn't kidding. Tommy shivered at the waves of intimidation he felt coming off Dream, "I know how to be quick too. I can pull it off if it's just me sneaking around."

"I'm sure you have a couple of hours anyway. That's *if* the pillagers come to choose people," Skeppy replied just as seriously. Dream nodded and turned to Tommy.

"I can go now and be quick. I'll go to Ranboo first to tell him about our escape idea and see how he can help then I'll tell Sapnap and the others before hurrying back," Dream explained and Tommy

looked at him in confusion, "So can I have the bobby pins?"

Tommy wordlessly handed them over and Dream immediately got to work trying to pick the lock. Skeppy shifted around anxiously, "Just please be careful Dream. I really don't want anyone else to be punished."

"I'll stick to the shadows don't worry," Dream replied with effort and his eyes narrowed in concentration, "I'm more determined than ever. They won't catch me sneaking around."

"Seems like they don't care much for us right now," Fundy sighed, sounding anxious himself, "By the way Tommy, is that why the pillagers were gone for so long? They were trying to catch you and Tubbo?"

"Some of them chased us for hours, yeah," Tommy shrugged, "We did that to study their intentions and how they moved."

"You sounded like Techno just then," Wilbur teased but his eyes betrayed a sense of proudness and disbelief. Tommy scoffed.

Dream huffed as he failed yet again to successfully pick the lock. He was being extra careful, praying that he wouldn't accidentally break the bobby pins. Then as he tried again for the third time, his eyes widened as he heard a successful click.

"Third times a charm," Fundy said with a small smile. Dream pocketed the bobby pins and went to open the door. He looked towards Skeppy, who was practically chewing his nails from nerves. Dream grinned, "Don't worry. I'll be in and out, as fast as I'm able to."

"Good luck..." Wilbur murmured, his expression serious. Dream nodded and slowly opened the door, stepping out with his gaze pinned on the stairway. He carefully closed the cell door behind him without a sound and stalked towards the staircase.

The other random prisoners that saw him gawked at him but Dream put a finger to his lips to gesture that they should keep quiet and not rat him out. He was relieved when they turned their heads, acting as if they hadn't seen anything.

Dream clung to the wall as he ascended the staircase and squatted to observe the surroundings as he made it to the top steps. He glanced around and after not seeing any immediate pillagers, he snuck to the right and practically glided down the right staircase.

Once he made it in sight to the hall of cells his eyes widened. He glanced around at the prisoners and was shocked at the emotion he felt welling in his chest when he caught the familiar gaze of Bad.

"*Dream!*" Bad choked out, already tearing up and Dream shuffled over to his cell as quickly as he could. As he got closer he noticed Antfrost sharing a cell with Bad and Nikki was in a cell with an insanely tall guy. His eyes widened at the differently colored skin and eyes. That was Ranboo?!

Dream turned and clutched the bars. Bad immediately crawled towards him, "Bad, are you okay?"

"Y-Yeah but what the muffin are *you* doing here?!" Bad gasped out and Antfrost got closer too, looking stunned.

"I picked the lock of my cell. I came because I needed to tell you guys something, especially Ranboo," Dream explained, smiling at Bad. He was grateful it seemed his black-clad friend was truly alright.

"What...?" The man in the cell with Nikki muttered, his eyes widening, "You're Dream...?"

"That'd be me..." Dream nodded at him, glancing off to the side to see a blonde boy studying him curiously, "And that must be Tubbo...thank you for forcing Tommy to put bobby pins in his hair."

Tubbo's eyes widened like he was startled before he smiled brightly, "No problem! Wow, I didn't know he kept them! That's useful!"

"Yeah no kidding," Dream chuckled before shaking his head, "Anyways, Ranboo you said you had a way to get everyone out of their cells right? Skeppy mentioned that."

Ranboo blinked in surprise, "Uh, yeah...it's hard to explain...."

"But you can do it? For sure?" Dream questioned, narrowing his eyes at him. Ranboo gulped and nodded after a moment of hesitation, "Good, because we need you to get everyone out of their cells tomorrow."

Everyone gasped except Tubbo, who rose an eyebrow, "What?!"

"We can't wait for Techno to come," Dream muttered for the thousandth time, "George might die before then. We need your help to escape. If you can for *sure* get everyone out of their cells, then everyone can fight off the pillagers."

"I-I can do that but..." Ranboo trailed off, biting his lip nervously, "It'll take a little bit of time and who knows if everyone will actually fight."

"They will....maybe not all of the random prisoners but those of us that are skilled enough can do

this," Dream said seriously.

"And you're going to tell the others to get them ready...?" Nikki asked and smiled hesitantly when Dream nodded.

"I'm going to sneak in and tell Sapnap right after I talk to you guys," Dream explained as he glanced at the staircase with narrowed eyes.

"I don't know about this..." Antfrost said shakily, rubbing his arm, "There's so many things that can go wrong and no offense Ranboo but this plan relies heavily on you..."

Ranboo swallowed, "I-I know...but I think I can do this..."

"I'm *sure* you can!" Tubbo grinned brightly, startling him, "You just finished telling me about that amazing power of yours and I can't believe it until I see it!"

"What power?" Dream asked curiously, studying Ranboo, who shifted nervously.

"It's like silk touch," Ranboo whispered, "I can use the abnormal strength in my hands to pull out the bricks on the floor and place them back all in the perfect shape....I can do that to most things..."

Dream's eyes widened and his mouth dropped open. He felt at a loss for words for a moment, "Y-You can really do that?"

"Yeah, I can," Ranboo nodded seriously, "I can open up a hole for me to climb through and then I can use my hands to break the locks apart."

"Holy shit," Dream gasped, stunned momentarily.

"Language," Bad muttered and Dream found himself surprised by how much he missed Bad in that moment, "This seems like it can work. I trust Dream and Ranboo."

"Same!" Nikki smiled, "And Tubbo seems pretty positive about it too."

"I am," Tubbo smirked, his nose wrinkling in a cute way when he did, "This plan could work if everyone gives their 100% all!"

Tubbo then glanced at the random prisoners, "And don't worry about the other prisoners. When the time comes and they see us all fighting hard, I'm sure they'll make their choice to fight back just as hard as us!"

"You really think so?" Bad asked curiously, "A lot of them seem to have given up hope of escaping. They might be too scared."

Dream frowned, "This'll sound mean but I'm not waiting on them to act if that's the case."

"I'm positive they'll fight back once they see us all fighting with all we got," Tubbo said seriously, some emotion in his eyes as he looked at the ground, "I know how hard it is to fight back against captors when you have suppressed fear towards them, but it's easier when you actually have people to fight back with."

The room went awkwardly silent at his words as they all looked at him with wide eyes. Antfrost frowned, feeling a pang in his chest, "How do you....?"

Tubbo smiled a smile that didn't come close to reaching his eyes as he pulled his knees to his chest, "Let's just say I've been in a situation similar to this before."

Dream's eyes widened at the anger he felt building for this boy he literally just met. He seemed too cheerful and sweet. He'd been through something similar he said and it was obvious he wasn't kidding. He'd been through something like that and yet he still willingly came with his friend to help them escape. Tubbo had Dream's whole respect for that.

"I'll definitely get us out tomorrow. What time?" Ranboo growled, surprising everyone and startling Dream out of his thoughts. Ranboo appeared to be angry after hearing Tubbo's words as well.

"I think we should do it early tomorrow morning, before they bring us food," Dream answered and Ranboo nodded.

"I can do that. Just...just tell the others I'm doing it and tell them to be prepared to fight. I don't want to be the reason anyone gets hurt," Ranboo muttered and Dream frowned in understanding, his chest aching as he thought of George.

"I need to go," Dream whispered and Bad frowned, grabbing onto his sleeve, "I need to hurry and tell Sapnap then make it back to my cell. Just in case."

"Okay...and Dream? Can you...can you tell Skeppy I love him and..." Bad trailed off, his eyes filling with tears but he smiled, "And tell him I'll see him tomorrow?"

Dream blinked before smirking, "Of course I will."

"Good luck Dream. Be careful," Nikki murmured worriedly. Dream nodded at her and then smiled

at the others before pulling away and stalking back towards the staircase as fast as he could.

Dream sucked in a calming breath as he checked to make sure the coast was clear before he snuck towards the left staircase. He felt a little more urgency which made him take two steps at a time. He ignored the random prisoners and rushed straight towards the back where he could make out Karl in a cell.

"Oh my God!" Karl gasped when he saw him and Dream saw another male lean out beside him, both their expressions stunned, "Dream!"

"*Dream?!"*

Dream winced when he heard Sapnap's hoarse voice. He stopped and glanced at the cell across from Karl's. His eyes widened and his breath stuck in his throat at the sight of his best friend. His eyes were dark from lack of sleep and he was pale. His eyes were wide and Dream could see bruises marring his wrist along with dried blood on his hands like he'd been beating the walls or something. That's when he also noticed scratch-like marks on Sapnap's forearms and even on his cheeks.

"Sapnap...oh my God..." Dream gasped out as he rushed over and squatted down in front of him, grabbing the metal bars, "What happened to you?"

Sapnap followed his eyesight and winced like he was ashamed, "Um..."

"He did that to himself the other day when George...." A male voice trailed off quietly, sounding upset. Dream figured that one must be Quackity.

"He was having panic attacks," Karl added just as quietly, "We've been trying our best to keep him calm but..."

Dream felt his heart drop into his feet as Sapnap continued to look away from him, "Sapnap....I'm so sorry...this is all my fault."

Sapnap's gaze pinned on him immediately, his eyes wide, "No it's not! I...I don't blame you Dream, it's those stupid motherf-"

Sapnap cut himself off, his hands shaking, "How are you *here* Dream...?"

"I was able to pick the lock. Look, before I run out of time there's something I need to tell you guys," Dream frowned when Sapnap looked at him confused, upset, and wary all in one.

"What is it?" Karl asked, tilting his head.

"Ranboo will be breaking everyone out of their cells tomorrow morning. It'll be early, way before they bring us breakfast," Dream informed them and watched Quackity's eyes widen.

"What?!" Karl gasped and Dream focused on Sapnap when he noticed his friend's eyes widened and his fingers curl into fists.

Dream hurriedly explained about how Tommy and Tubbo were sent by Techno and about Ranboo's ability. He went on how Ranboo will be able to get them out of their cells and then everyone can fight back on the pillagers.

"Are we really doing this?!" Quackity demanded, his eyes lighting up in hope.

"We have to," Dream growled, gripping the bars tighter, "For George. We have to help him and we *need* to get outta here."

"We know where the weapons are and Sapnap knows where George is," Karl nodded seriously, his eyes also lighting up in hope.

Dream nodded again before turning to Sapnap, who'd been shaky and quiet this whole time. He flinched back when Sapnap pinned his stare at him, "I *can't* do this again Dream....not unless you promise me that we can pull this off."

"I promise on my life Sapnap," Dream answered seriously, staring into his eyes to show off how serious he was.

"No. Promise on *George's* life. On mine..." Sapnap frowned, his eyes finally betraying how scared he still was. Dream was momentarily taken back at his words.

"I...I promise on George's life and on your life. I'm getting us out of here," Dream replied and Sapnap's shoulders relaxed slightly.

Sapnap looked over at Karl and Quackity, who both grinned supportively, "Then I'm in...once Ranboo gets us out and we get weapons, I'll lead us to George."

Dream felt relieved that Sapnap was looking much calmer and determined, "Great....and once this is all over....why don't we do the same to them?"

"Huh?" Sapnap blinked as he looked over at Dream. His eyes widened at the dark look in Dream's eyes.

"After this is over we should throw the pillagers in the sweatbox and leave them to rot," Dream smiled and Karl shivered, "Like they did to you and George."

Quackity and Karl both shared a look but Sapnap, after getting over his initial surprise, smiled back, "That actually sounds nice dude."

"I knew you'd say that..." Dream chuckled.

"I don't know guys....wouldn't that be stooping to their level?" Karl asked hesitantly and froze when Dream glanced over at them.

"After all they've done to everyone? That doesn't come *close* to their level," Dream muttered and Sapnap nodded in tense agreement. Karl immediately quieted, "I need to hurry back now, just in case. Be ready for tomorrow, okay?"

"We will be....just be careful," Sapnap sighed, his nerves returning. He shoved his shaking hands out of sight and Dream frowned. He'd help Sapnap get better once they were out of this hellhole.

"See you tomorrow," Dream grinned slightly, trying to show confidence without it being overconfidence. Then he turned and stalked towards the staircase, taking deep breaths.

He was sure of it. Things would change tomorrow.

George opened his eyes, unsure of when he closed them and how long they'd been closed. He was laying on his side on the warm ground. He was already pretty much covered in sweat and he felt uncomfortable; it was like he was in a constant state of nausea and his throat hurt from how dry it felt. He also kept falling in and out of sleep near constantly, like he didn't have energy to keep himself awake for long.

He sighed as he shifted weakly. It'd already been a day and he wasn't sure how much more he could take. He felt all weak and shaky. George never felt more embarrassed than he did when he had to take off his pants just to keep himself from overheating. It seemed like a useless action anyway. He felt mortified at the idea of someone finding him there in nothing but his boxers but there wasn't much he could do about it.

George never hated his body more than he did now. He felt so weak. His stomach finally stopped growling hours ago but he couldn't stop shaking and he could bring himself to stay sitting up for very long. It'd only been little over a day and he....

Frustrated, George pushed his face into his hoodie and found himself desperately missing his friends. How were they? Were they okay? Nothing happened afterwards, right? George hated how thinking of that made his heart race even more than it already was due to the heat and nausea he

felt.

Just two more days, he could do two more days. Surely he wasn't *that* weak, right?

Yet as his eyes closed against his will and he felt more energy drain from him, forcing him into another dreamless sleep, George knew he was fighting a losing battle.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you enjoyed reading!! I wrote this a little longer than usual but a lot needed to happen for the next chapter! Dream got pretty dark in the chapter...he's running out of fucks to give.

Also, I loveee Tubbo's character and I feel so bad for him and Sapnap here! UGH! 🥺

As usual, let me know in the comments if you have any questions! I love reading each and every one of your comments. I also like replying to them, haha! 😊

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

The day of escaping is at hand; Dream and Sapnap shock everyone with their ruthlessness and more surprises occur.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I wanted to get this update out semi-early because I have exciting weekend plans with my best friends! Thank you to everyone who is continuously supporting my story, I appreciate it so much! 😊😊

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream managed to get back to his cell with no problems. He smirked when Skeppy let out the most dramatic sigh of relief he'd ever heard when he and the others caught sight of him. Dream chuckled as he opened his cell door, walked inside the cell, and closed it behind him.

"I am *so* glad you didn't get caught," Skeppy sighed out as he rubbed his face with both hands, his shoulders slumping with relief.

"Yeah, how did it go?" Fundy asked so quickly he almost spoke over Skeppy.

"Did you see Tubbo?" Tommy questioned just as quickly and Dream blinked at them firing off questions.

"It went just as planned and yes, I saw Tubbo. He's okay," Dream assured and nodded towards Tommy, who seemed a little relieved about something.

"So Ranboo can break us out?" Wilbur asked quietly, staring at Dream.

"Yeah, he can use this ability he has to break the locks," Dream explained and he felt a thrill of anticipation rush through him, "He'll do it early tomorrow morning before they bring food for us..."

Fundy blinked, stunned, "Well thats...pretty soon."

"It's actually perfect," Skeppy said as his eyes widened and he looked at Dream, "They won't be as active and some of them will even be asleep then. Too slow to react to the situation properly."

"Yup. That's what I was thinking too," Dream smirked. Then his eyes lit up as he remembered something, "Oh and Skeppy?"

"Yeah?" Skeppy rose an eyebrow.

"Bad says he loves you and he'll see you tomorrow," Dream grinned as he watched Skeppy's eyes widen again, his cheeks flushing.

Then he chuckled when Skeppy eyed the ground with a silly grin forming on his face. Wilbur spoke up again, his voice sounding lighter this time, "Well, I guess we need to get some sleep if we wanna be prepared for tomorrow."

"Exactly what I was thinking," Fundy said with a small smile as he stretched out his legs and leaned against the wall, "I can't believe this is *happening*. We're really fighting tomorrow."

"What about these other prisoners?" Tommy asked suddenly and they all turned to look at him. He was narrowing his eyes as he studied the other random prisoners, "Should we tell them? They'll have to fight with us tomorrow after all."

"Right....will they though?" Skeppy pondered out loud as his brow furrowed.

"We'll tell them tomorrow as they're let out," Dream told Tommy who stared at him before shrugging with indifference, "And they'll fight....or at least Tubbo seems to think so. He's pretty positive they'll fight back once they see us doing it."

Tommy's eyes immediately cut back to him and Dream blinked back at the seriousness in his gaze, "Tubbo seemed fine, right?"

Even Wilbur raised his eyebrow at the random question and Dream nodded slowly, "Yeah, he's alright. Trust me. He seems like a pretty cheerful and positive boy."

Tommy didn't say anything to that as he looked a bit lost in thought but Wilbur chuckled, "That's Tubbo alright. He's a bit crazy too though."

"I believe it," Dream grinned before remembering something he hadn't told them yet, "Oh and I almost forgot. Once Ranboo lets everyone out Karl said he could lead us to where the weapons are stored when the pillagers put them away."

"So could I," Fundy nodded as he also grinned, "It'll be so good to see everyone, ugh. I'm gonna fight like hell tomorrow!"

"I second that," Skeppy cheered before yawning once, "Let's get some shut-eye. We need as much energy as possible."

Dream agreed with that, leaning backwards until he rested as comfortably as he could against the wall. He smirked to himself as he thought about the coming events tomorrow. He was sure without being too overconfident that everything would work out somehow. He'd make sure of it. Just as Fundy said, he was going to fight like hell, nothing getting in his way as he gave back not even half the pain they inflicted on him and his friends.

They won't be expecting it. They don't even have guards posted in any of the hall of cells. They were overconfident, just as he had been, and this time that was going to be *their* downfall.

Ranboo shifted uneasily for the third time in less than two minutes. He was restless as the hours passed and couldn't muster the courage or willpower to fall asleep. He glanced at Bad and Antfrost across the way, both of whom were not fully asleep either but instead had their eyes closed as they rested.

Nikki was the only one that seemed to be resting easily yet even *she* wasn't in a deep sleep. Ranboo believed that most of them probably weren't able to fully fall asleep. He glanced over at his side where Tubbo, being the only one *actually* asleep, was leaning against the bars by his side. They'd been talking almost non-stop since they met. Tubbo seemed very curious about him and not in the fear-inducing way Ranboo was used to.

Tubbo appeared to be a very unique individual; the way he asked personal questions yet somehow knowing when to back off or change the subject was kind of incredible. He seemed like he was really good at reading the emotions in other people and adjusting his tone as well as his expressions when needed. It was weird to see that in someone who looked like they were 14. He wondered how old Tubbo actually was. He definitely couldn't be older than him.

"Ranboo...?"

Ranboo glanced over at Nikki as she slowly stretched her limbs. She was blinking tiredly over at him, "You're not resting?"

"I can't....the nerves..." Ranboo trailed off and Nikki smiled sadly, nodding her head without asking him to elaborate. Ranboo loved that about her; how she was such a caring sister-figure for everyone she met. Or at least, that's what it seemed like to Ranboo so far, "It's almost time to start..."

Nikki's eyes grew wide, "Oh...how long until we start exactly?"

"It's almost dawn so...an hour or two," Ranboo told her and her smile tightened as she looked from Ranboo to Tubbo then to Ant and Bad. Ranboo hated to see her so worried so he smiled gently, "Just try to get some more rest, okay? I'll wake you up soon."

Her lips pursed but she didn't argue, resting her head against the wall and closing her eyes again with a long sigh. Ranboo allowed his eyes to close as well as he tried to reign in his growing anxiety. He just had to remind himself that he could definitely help the others and then they'd be out.

Ranboo quickly ran through everything he needed to do in his head. Then he kept replaying his part in this plan over and over again before he began to get a headache. As he obsessed over going through every detail and possibility in his head, he realized that an hour and a half had already past.

His heart picked up in pace and let out a long calming breath. It was time to start. Ranboo jumped when he felt something grab onto the sleeve of his black coat. He glanced over and met Tubbo's gaze. Tubbo smiled, "You okay?"

"Uh....ask me again after this," Ranboo replied hesitantly and Tubbo giggled.

"Okay I *will*," Tubbo's smile widened and Ranboo felt jealous of his positivity that everything would work out, "Time to wake everyone up, yeah?"

"Yeah," Ranboo nodded, already turning to wake up Nikki. She immediately awoke at the first shake.

Tubbo, however, startled everyone when he said loudly, "Antfrost! Bad! Time to wake up!"

Ant jumped up, his eyes snapping open and Bad gasped, shaking his head when he moved too quickly. Tubbo simply laughed even when some of the random prisoners began grumbling at the disturbance.

"Oh, it's time..." Antfrost sighed, his hands shaking. Ranboo understood how he felt.

"Yup! I can't wait to see Ranboo's powers!" Tubbo exclaimed as his blue eyes lit up. Ranboo blinked at him and when he saw his childlike excitement he laughed as he stood.

"Well, it might be underwhelming so don't get *too* excited," Ranboo muttered under his breath but Tubbo simply stood as close to Ranboo as the bars allowed when Ranboo squatted in front of the cell door.

Ranboo hear Nikki shuffle closer to him for support and Ranboo let out another calming breath despite his racing heart as he used his abnormal strength to dig his fingers into the crevices of the nether brick floor. Tubbo gasped when Ranboo's fingers dug into the ground more and, once he was far enough down, he pulled the block up in a perfect shape.

"Holy muffin!" Bad gasped and Antfrost's eyes widened significantly. Ranboo immediately placed the block to the side and felt calm wash over him at the habit of moving blocks.

"That's *amazing*!" Tubbo said in a genuine tone and he also sounded shocked, "I can't believe I'm seeing this."

"Me either," Antfrost commented under his breath and Nikki giggled. Ranboo didn't say anything as he dug out two more bricks, placing them away randomly until he had a decent hole big enough to squeeze through.

Ranboo immediately squeezed into the hole and dragged himself out to the other side just under the bars. It was uncomfortable but not unbearable and Ranboo felt relieved once he was on the other side. He glanced at Nikki, "You can crawl through too Nikki."

Nikki blinked at him but nodded, going to follow what he did. Ranboo helped her up once she was close enough, "Thanks Ranboo!"

"No problem. Now..." Ranboo glanced around at the cell locks, his fingers almost shaking from the nerves. He realized a lot of the random prisoners were staring at him in a mixture of awe, confusion, shock, and in some cases, fear. He ignored that for now, despite the pang in his chest.

"Let's hurry," Bad whispered as he eyed the staircase desperately, "There's a lot of locks to break. Just do your best, Ranboo."

"I will," Ranboo nodded, already breaking out into a sweat as he grabbed the lock to Bad and Antfrost's cell before literally putting pressure and prying it from the cell door with a cracking sound that sounded louder than it probably was.

Antfrost and Bad walked out slowly, like they were walking in a dream, their eyes wide. Ranboo wasted no time turning around and he broke the lock to Tubbo's cell. Tubbo beamed at him as he walked out, "Awesome Ranboo! See? I *knew* you could do it!"

Ranboo blinked at the small boy before smiling, feeling a bit calmer just from his words. He shook his head and they followed him as he went around and broke the rest of the locks as the random prisoners all began murmuring in a panic.

"Don't worry! We're getting you out of here and then we're getting the others out!" Tubbo kept explaining as Bad and Nikki joined in trying to calm them down. Antfrost just kept watching the staircase warily.

Once every lock was broken and all the prisoners were out of their cells, Ranboo immediately headed for the staircase as he heard Bad tell the others, "Don't panic, okay? Just stay quiet and

stick with us. We'll do the rest!"

There was still some unease and panic in the random prisoners but with Bad and Tubbo's continued reassurance, they followed along. Ranboo checked the surroundings once he made it to the top of the staircase. He didn't hear much noise or see anyone and he was thankful for that.

Ranboo then rushed down the center staircase and wasn't all that surprised to see Dream already awake like he hadn't slept at all, standing abruptly in his cell. Ranboo rushed to his cell first and was just starting to break the lock when Skeppy and the others stirred.

"Oh holy shit," Fundy gasped, "I forgot how fucking *tall* you were Ranboo, you scared the *hell* outta me."

"Sorry," Ranboo chuckled as he pried the lock from Dream's cell. The others caught up to where he was and he heard Bad suck in a breath.

"Skeppy!" Bad cried out, nearly plowing down Nikki and Tubbo on his way to the cell by Ranboo's side. Skeppy immediately sprung up, eyes wide, as he locked onto the black-clad male.

"Oh my God, *Bad!!*" Skeppy near-shouted as he pushed past Dream to get out of the cell. Ranboo almost didn't move out of the way of the door in time. Skeppy immediately grabbed Bad close and they were both crying as they hugged.

"Tubbo!"

"Tommy!" Tubbo cheered as he threw himself at the cell of another blonde boy. Ranboo decided to move along and break the lock to Fundy and Wilbur's cell.

The others were trying to keep their chatting low as Ranboo went around breaking the locks. Nikki hugged Wilbur immediately as he left the cell and he chuckled. Dream gasped when Bad finally parted from Skeppy with tears in his eyes and he jumped on Dream for a hug. Dream laughed a little and Skeppy smiled, wiping the tears off his face.

Ranboo shuffled backwards as he broke the last lock and Antfrost was doing his best to calm the random prisoners that came out of their cells, looking lost and confused. He was thankful when Dream finally noticed and stepped way from Bad, "Listen, we're getting out of here. We're getting *everyone* out of here. I hope that you'll help us but regardless I'm not waiting around for you if you decide to be cowardly."

Bad smacked Dream's arm, "Don't be so mean."

Dream shrugged, eyeing some of the random prisoners' reactions, "I'm just telling the truth. I want us *all* to escape but we have to stick together and *fight* together for this to work properly."

"Dream's right!" Tubbo chimed in, smiling warmly at the strangers he didn't know. Ranboo found himself smiling back at Tubbo before he realized it. Tubbo just had that effect, "And we won't leave you behind!"

Dream's gaze went to Ranboo, who stiffened, "Thanks Ranboo. Let's get the rest of us out...then Karl will take us to the weapons."

"Gotcha," Ranboo nodded as he turned to the staircase.

"And try to be as quiet as possible," Wilbur advised everyone. Ranboo was amused when a lot of the random prisoners nodded. Ranboo didn't wait around any longer and walked up the center staircase.

He gasped however, when he came into sight of two pillagers coming down the steps from the platform warily. Their eyes widened as they locked, "What the fuck?!"

Ranboo flinched back instinctively and gasped when Dream was suddenly sprinting past him, punching one pillager before yanking the sword out his hand. Ranboo saw the second pillager panic and swing his sword at Dream so Ranboo acted immediately and slammed the pillager to the ground. The pillager's sword clamored to the ground with a loud clang.

"Oh God!" Fundy gasped and Ranboo turned to see the others staring wide eyed behind them.

"Ranboo, hurry. Go let the others out! I don't know how but maybe they heard something," Dream gestured to the two pillagers on the ground, "Me and the others will handle them while you do that."

"O-Okay," Ranboo breathed out shakily as he backed up and practically jumped down the staircase to the right. The random prisoners there jumped in shock but Ranboo ignored them as he ran to the end of the hall where the others were.

"Ranboo! You're actually here!" Karl gasped excitedly and Quackity stood abruptly. Ranboo frantically tore the lock off their cell loudly.

"You look panicked," Sapnap's voice reached his ears, "What's going on?"

"The others are fighting a couple of pillagers. More might be coming," Ranboo explained as he opened the door for Karl and Quackity, who immediately shuffled out before turning to tear the lock off Sapnap's cell, "We have to move quickly."

"Dream's fighting?" Sapnap asked calmly though his eyes flashed. Ranboo nodded, gasping when

Sapnap threw open the door to his cell and ran out without a second thought. Karl and Quackity gasped before following after him.

Ranboo just watched them leave for a moment before he focused on the panicking random prisoners still locked in their cells. He still had a job to do.

Dream used the sword he stole from the pillager to run it through the other on the ground without blinking. Both pillagers had been trying to struggle against him and take the weapon back from him.

"Dream!"

Dream immediately whirled around and gasped when a black and white blur rammed into him for a strong hug. He could recognize that raven hair anywhere, "Sapnap!"

"I can't believe how easily you just killed that guy!" Tommy commented as he made a disgusted face at the two dead pillagers at Dream's feet.

"Kill or be killed," Wilbur shrugged as he patted Tommy's shoulder. Everyone turned when Karl and Quackity came running up the steps, panting like they ran a marathon but Dream knew it was just partly them panicking.

"We need to move on *now*," Dream said as Sapnap parted from the hug, looking calmer, "Karl, Fundy....lead the way to the weapons?"

"Sure," Karl nodded seriously and Fundy pushed past Nikki and Wilbur to be in front of the group with Karl.

"*Wait*, where's Ranboo?" Tubbo asked loudly, looking around with narrowed eyes.

"He's letting the last of the prisoners out. He'll catch up," Quackity explained as Dream began moving behind Karl and Fundy. The others slowly shuffled behind them in a big group line.

"Just keep your eyes open," Sapnap warned everyone as he looked over his shoulder, "More will *definitely* be coming."

"Reassuring...." Antfrost shivered and Bad frowned, patting his shoulder from where was pressed up against Skeppy's side. Skeppy seemed unable to let Bad leave his side like he had to be touching him at all times.

Dream tensed when the platform came into view and froze for a second when the three pillagers that were working there turned and saw them. Dream wasted no time bulldozing past Fundy and

Karl, swinging his sword like a demon released from hell.

He barely registered Sapnap suddenly by his side and he was so wrapped up in his fight that he didn't even notice when Sapnap grabbed a sword from one of the three pillagers and cut another's neck with it.

"Holy shit," Karl gasped out as he blinked in surprise. Sapnap and Dream stood side by side, already covered in blood, "You guys are on *fire* or something....holy...you didn't waste any time."

"Language," Bad admonished and Skeppy couldn't help the almost hysterical giggle that left his mouth, pulling Bad tighter to his side. He couldn't believe he was finally holding Bad, after all.

"You two okay?" Wilbur asked seriously, raising a brow.

"What do you mean?" Sapnap retorted with a head tilt as Dream gestured to Karl and Fundy to keep leading on.

"You two just killed them so quickly....fighting like...I dunno. That was startling to say the least," Wilbur laughed a little and both Antfrost and Nikki were nodding by his side.

"They aren't getting away with what they've done," Dream spoke up in a low rumble as Sapnap frowned in agreement. The others went quiet while a lot of the random prisoners shifted in the background awkwardly, obviously frightened by Dream.

"Just c'mon," Fundy sighed, "We're almost to the weapon stuff..."

"Yeah it's just through this archway...." Karl pointed out as they both lead the others to left of the stairs by the platform. They went through an archway into a wide open room with nothing but chests and flat tables filled with items.

Dream's vision zeroed in on the table to the right corner where he noticed a familiar white mask. Dream gasped and zoomed over there, picking up the mask with semi-shaking hands before strapping it to his face immediately. An unusual amount of calmness overwhelmed him.

When he turned he blinked when he noticed some of the others tense while others just seemed surprised by his mask. Tommy rose an eyebrow, "Holy crap, what is that mask? That's the weirdest thing I've ever seen!"

"Not as weird as your face," Dream shrugged immaturity while Wilbur, Fundy, and Tubbo let out a startled laugh.

"I can't believe you still have that...." Sapnap smiled, something nostalgic in his eyes. Dream grinned a little.

"Ohhh they have my crossbow and our packs!" Bad cried out as he ran from Skeppy's side to grab it. Skeppy immediately followed him and grabbed a sword. Dream watched as the others went around grabbing weapons to arm themselves. Dream directed some of the random prisoners to grab weapons too after Dream grabbed his own pack, shrugging it on.

That's when he noticed Ranboo gliding into the room behind him with another crowd of random prisoners that he must have freed. Tubbo's eyes lit up, "Ranboo! Hey! Do you even need a sword to fight?!"

Ranboo jolted when everyone's eyes turned to him at Tubbo's shout. He smiled sheepishly at the ground, avoiding their stares, "Yes I still need a weapon to fight..."

"Well, here!" Tubbo grinned as he handed him a diamond sword. Ranboo blinked but grabbed it from him, "Oh and this is my best friend, Tommy! Tommy, this is Ranboo!"

Tommy looked both amused and surprised at the sight of Ranboo, "Hello Ranboo...you look sick. In the nice way."

Ranboo chuckled, "Thank you..."

"I have to agree with that," Sapnap grinned and Nikki giggled at the blatant embarrassment on Ranboo's face as he wasn't used to compliments.

"Guys!" Wilbur suddenly called out, making some of them jump. Dream eyes immediately went to Wilbur where he was watching outside the room, "More are coming. There's a lot this time!"

"Oh no..." Karl gulped, his hands shaking around his sword. Fundy just slapped his back while a lot of the random prisoners panicked.

"Those who aren't as confident about fighting grab a shield," Dream urged, his heart plummeting at the fact there wasn't enough shields to go around. He was briefly amused when Skeppy forced Bad to take a shield while Karl did the same to Nikki.

Dream pushed past Wilbur and exchanged a glance with him. Sapnap immediately followed and then his look darkened when the pillagers finally made it into view. Dream scowled, "Get ready! They're here!"

Dream ran forward immediately and noticed Sapnap at his side like he was in sync with him. He briefly heard Wilbur shuffling behind them. The pillagers' seemed surprised at how fast Dream and

Sapnap came running at them.

They both gave them no chances as they swung their swords quickly. Dream growled as he remembered everything they'd done. One pillager managed to get a lucky hit on his bicep and gasped when Dream just pushed on, stabbing the pillager through the middle before turning to slash another pillager trying to sneak up on him.

Wilbur leapt into the fray with Fundy, Skeppy, and Quackity behind him. Dream noticed an arrow soar through the air and hit a pillager that didn't even get the chance to get close to Skeppy as they fought. He chuckled inwardly, knowing that was Bad that shot the arrow.

Dream didn't let himself get distracted as he fought, so he wasn't sure when Karl, Nikki, or Antfrost leapt into the fray. He *was* surprised when Tommy slashed at a pillager that was trying to gang up on Dream. Tommy seemed to be quite skilled despite his age but Dream noticed he wasn't fighting to kill. He seemed content to deal blows and push them towards those that would finish the job instead.

Tubbo was following behind Tommy closely, fighting with an actual *smile* on his face. Not an evil smile or anything, just a smile, and it baffled Dream for a second. And then Dream noticed that wherever Tubbo went, Ranboo was following. It was kind of cute.

"*Dream!*" Sapnap called and Dream startled, his eyes searching out his best friend. He gasped when he noticed him being surrounded by four pillagers. Dream growled and practically slid under the arm of one pillager trying to fight him and rushed forward, pushing back two of the four that was on Sapnap.

"You won't get away!" One of the pillagers spat at him as they crossed blades. Dream smiled darkly.

"I recall saying those same type of words to *you*," He growled and the pillager's eyes widened. Dream pushed him back and swung his sword, cutting across the pillager's abdomen. He looked away from the gore that followed, briefly feeling guilty that Tubbo, Tommy, or Ranboo might see that.

"Thanks Dream," Sapnap sighed out as Dream turned to check on him. Sapnap already killed the two that were bearing down on him, "We need to get to George."

"Why don't you two go ahead?" Wilbur called out, hearing what Sapnap said and Dream paused, glancing over to see there were still numerous pillagers fighting with the others and some of the random prisoners.

"Yeah we can handle *this* much. Just hurry back!" Karl also called out, barely missing a hit from a pillager. Dream noticed Antfrost quickly take that one out.

"We will!" Sapnap called back before grabbing Dream's wrist, "C'mon!"

Dream didn't resist as he was pulled to the back of the platform. Sapnap let go of his wrist when more pillagers came swarming. Dream immediately jumped forward to stick his sword in the throat of the first one while Sapnap killed two others behind him without blinking.

They didn't stop running and Dream felt his heart racing out of his chest when a long staircase came into view. Sapnap yelled, "We're almost there. It's down here!"

Dream couldn't run fast enough and his eyes widened when a giant iron door with three latches came into view. Sapnap barely stopped in time, almost bulldozing into the door. He shakily undid all the latches and Dream impatiently shuffled behind him.

They were *this* close to George. They *almost* had him. Sapnap threw open the door and they both ran in before freezing at the sight that greeted them. George was lying on his side in nothing but his boxers. His otherwise porcelain pale skin was littered with red splotches here and there, mostly on his chest and thighs. His hair was almost damp with sweat and his eyes were closed.

"George!" Dream cried, immediately running over and falling to his knees beside the small male. Sapnap got to his knees right beside him. Dream quickly checked his pulse and felt immense relief that it was fine, albeit racing a little. He was also still breathing, thank God.

"He's unconscious?" Sapnap asked worriedly, shaking George's shoulder gently to try and rouse him, "Holy shit, his skin is *really* warm..."

Dream noticed that George didn't wake up when Sapnap shook him and frowned worriedly, "We gotta get him outta here quickly. I'll carry him and you stay in front in case any pillagers show."

"Yeah, sounds like a good idea," Sapnap frowned, his eyes lighting up with anger, "Let's hurry back. I don't want to leave the others alone too long. We seemed to be handling ourselves pretty good but there's so many...at least some of the random prisoners were finally fighting back."

"Yeah..." Dream trailed off. Dream carefully grabbed George in his arms bridal style, wincing at how hot his skin felt. Sapnap scrambled to gather George's clothes and they both hightailed it out of the hot room.

Dream immediately breathed easier once they were out and Sapnap hurried in front of him, sword out. Dream tensed when three pillagers came into view at the top of the staircase, looking both panicked and enraged.

"Stop *now*!" One called out, already rushing forward to subdue them. Sapnap growled and ran forward to meet him with a new sort of confidence. The pillagers' eyes widened, obviously not

expecting that from Sapnap.

That reaction was their undoing. Sapnap quickly disarmed and killed the first pillager before knocking out the second and slashing the third across the chest. Dream ignored the bodies that fell as they kept moving. Stopping wasn't ideal after all.

Once they were at the top of the stairs, Sapnap nearly collided with someone and pulled up his sword at once. However, it turned out to be Karl, "Sapnap! Thank God you guys found George!"

"Karl, holy shit! I almost *killed* you!" Sapnap frowned, hugging him while Dream looked around warily, pulling George closer to him.

"We did it Sapnap!" Karl started as he rushed through his words, "When you and Dream left to get George, Wilbur pulled everyone together. We kept fighting when more came and Tubbo managed to get the other random prisoners to fight as well. It was so shocking!"

"Really?" Sapnap blinked, his eyes wide.

"And Quackity found the valuables room! That's where I just came out of!" Karl gushed as he smiled wide, "We *did* it Sap!"

Dream's brow rose as his heart raced with anxiety, "Is everyone okay though? Are there more pillagers coming?"

"Not that we know of!" Karl grinned out, his eyes practically sparkling, "And it's all thanks to Ranboo! The pillagers weren't expecting *all* of us to be out and since all of us were out they didn't stand a chance!"

Karl seemed to sober for a moment, a bit more serious, "There were a bunch of pillagers that surrendered though..."

Dream's eyes flashed and he glared, "Surrendered?"

"Yeah, Tommy and Wilbur are up at the platform with the others. They're watching them. Quackity should be packing up the pillager's valuables right now. Figured they won't need it now," Karl laughed a little.

Something went through Sapnap's expression but he smiled a little, "Well we need to get out of here once he's done."

Karl glanced down at George in Dream's arms and his eyes widened, "Oh my honk....his skin is all

broke out!"

"I'm worried he might have had a heatstroke..." Dream confessed as he looked down at George, "I need some bottles of water. Let's go meet up with the others!"

"Yeah, let's go. I'll grab Quackity," Karl frowned, already turning and rushing down the hall a little. Sapnap and Dream silently followed. Karl called for Quackity, who met them with an ecstatic grin and a pack on his back. His grin fell when he caught sight of George but Dream didn't stop running. He rushed past them and ran up the steps to the platform.

The various conversations came to a halt when he came into view. Dream noticed everyone standing around tensely and a group of pillagers on their knees in the middle. Ranboo gasped when he caught sight of George, "Holy crap, is he okay?!"

"No, he's not," Dream ground out as he glared at the pillagers that refused to make eye contact, "I need bottles of water, now!"

Dream didn't notice some of them already had packs on from the weapons room until Nikki came forward with several bottles of water, "I just need one or two. We don't want to waste water."

Sapnap came closer and his eyes crinkled in worry, "Are you planning on pouring water on him or something? That might not help since we're in the nether where it's hot constantly."

"And he's not awake so he can't *drink* water," Bad frowned as he pushed himself to be beside Sapnap and Dream with Skeppy on his heels, "How about using one water bottle just to bring some relief to his body temperature and then we'll treat him once we're in the overworld?"

Dream frowned, thinking over his options. What they said made sense. He nodded slowly as he uncapped a bottle of water and ever so gently poured little bits of water over his chest and neck. He was surprised when Bad brought out a little cloth and handed it over to Dream. He took it and began to wipe up the sweat on George's face gently.

"What do we do with these guys?" Tommy spoke up, no hesitation to his tone, "You said there could be more in the area, right?"

"Possibly but we're not sure," Skeppy sighed.

"And they have a base in the overworld too. We're not sure where," Fundy added, "But since none of these guys will escape, they won't figure out what's happened for awhile."

"Maybe we should knock them out..." Nikki offered hesitantly. Dream looked over, his eyes unforgiving as he stared down the pillagers who were breaking out in a sweat.

"No. We're not leaving any chances. We're locking them in the sweatbox," Dream growled and felt satisfied when one or two of the pillagers looked up in a panic over that. Sapnap sneered.

"Oh *that* got their attention," He said in a harsh tone. The others went quiet.

"Well, there *are* locks on that door from what you've described," Wilbur spoke, looking as though he couldn't care less about the pillagers' fate, "Seems like the best bet to me. We'll be positive they won't be following after us for awhile."

"Yeah but...." Karl stopped speaking in the middle of his sentence, sighing loudly, unable to come up with a good argument.

One of the pillagers decided to speak up and it made a rush of rage wash over Dream, "Don't do that. You can just throw us in the cells."

"We can't because the locks are broken," Sapnap replied easily, like they were discussing the weather.

Dream realized that one of the pillagers in the small little group was the one that enjoyed their reactions when he announced George would be thrown in the sweatbox. Dream's eyes lit up, "Oh....its *you*. How ironic."

The pillager pointedly refused to look up, but he was sweating profusely. Dream grinned, gently putting George down beside Bad before walking over to squat in front of the pillager, "You're the one that *really* liked it when Sapnap was begging you not to put George in the sweatbox right?"

Sapnap's eyes widened for a fraction of a second before he glared down at the pillager in question. The pillager refused to answer and Dream ignored that as he continued with a growing smirk, "Then you remember how I told you that you'd regret what you did?"

A shiver washed over the pillager's body and some of the other pillagers tensed. Tubbo turned to Ranboo in confusion, "What's he mean?"

"I dunno..."

"Don't worry about it," Skeppy whispered, all the others quiet and unsure what to say as they watched this go down. Dream's smirk wasn't a friendly one. He looked even more intimidating than before with the child-like smiley-faced mask on.

Dream stood and gestured for Wilbur and Skeppy to come forward before glaring down at the pillager in question, "This is you regretting it."

"You want us to help you carry them down?" Wilbur asked slowly and Dream nodded, yanking the pillager in front of him to his feet. Skeppy and Wilbur silently grabbed two other pillagers while Sapnap grabbed another.

"I'll help too," Quackity spoke quietly as he grabbed the final one and Dream flashed him a brief look of gratitude before they all filed in a line to push the pillagers down the steps.

It was insanely quiet as Dream led them to the long staircase and began to descend. He chuckled under his breath when the pillager struggled a little. He tightened his hands immediately, "You guys are a bunch of sick *bastards*. Capturing people and taking away their freedom. Threatening them with the lives of their friends and torturing them when they don't do what you want."

"And *you're* any better?" The pillager scoffed, glaring over his shoulder. Dream glared, baring his teeth, "You killed all our companions in various ways without even blinking an eye and now you're gonna leave us to rot in a torturous death. Don't act like you're better than me."

"He *is* better than you," Sapnap growled out before Dream could even open his mouth to retaliate, "And you *definitely* don't deserve a quick death from all the people you've killed or tortured. So shut the fuck up."

The air was charged suddenly, making Skeppy, Quackity, and Wilbur a tad bit uncomfortable but the pillagers said nothing more as they finally reached the iron door at the bottom. Dream pushed the guy inside before moving away so that the others could do the same. He immediately latched the door closed once all pillagers were inside, feeling immense relief.

"You gave me a warning so allow me to give *you* one as well," The pillager spoke up from behind the door just as Dream was turning away. He froze, looking over his shoulder, "If you think it ends *here*, you're wrong. There are more of us out there. We may have underestimated you here but the others won't."

"Good," Dream snorted before walking away. He met Sapnap's eyes and noticed the slack in his shoulders from relief. He smiled and put his arm around Sapnap, "Let's get back, yeah? We don't have to worry about them now."

"Yeah..." Sapnap smiled gratefully and turned to Wilbur, Quackity, and Skeppy, "C'mon guys. Let's get up to everyone and get outta here for good!"

The moment they were out of the warped forest was the moment everyone began relaxing just a little bit more, chatting just a bit louder, and even the random prisoners were cheering amongst themselves at having escaped. Dream couldn't feel fully relieved yet. He still had an armful of unconscious George and he couldn't even treat him properly until they were out of the nether.

After much debate, Dream decided that Wilbur was right and that they should follow Tommy and Tubbo back to the portal they came through. It was the portal that Wilbur was forced to go through

when he was captured and where they tracked him to, so it made sense for them to go that way if they wanted a chance to meet up with Techno.

Even though everyone was talking almost non-stop as they walked, Dream and Sapnap stayed silent, walking side by side as they scanned their surroundings constantly. It wasn't that everyone else wasn't as vigilant, or maybe they actually weren't, but they just were so excited to all be together and out of the fortress that they couldn't stop chatting.

That could be said for Skeppy and Bad especially, who couldn't go one moment without being pressed against each other. Bad's arm was looped into Skeppy's and his face was bright as he kept telling Skeppy stories of what he'd been up to. Skeppy soaked it all in with a look on his face like he'd just gotten married to his soulmate or something. Nikki, Wilbur, and Tommy seemed to be getting along as well, talking back and forth relentlessly. Tommy teased that Nikki was Wilbur's new girlfriend but Nikki just laughed and denied it, saying she was Wilbur's new best friend instead.

Tubbo was cheerfully talking with Ranboo, almost too fast like he couldn't get everything he wanted to say out quick enough. It was kind of amusing. Ranboo, to his credit, simply stayed silent and listened to him with a small smile on his face, only speaking back when he was asked a direct question.

They fought off mobs whenever they got too close once they hit a crimson forest. This only happened a small handful of times after they left the warped forest. Fundy and Karl had to help Quackity after he'd gotten tangled in a vine trying to escape a hoglin. Dream was almost ready to charge full force until Antfrost killed the hoglin, laughing his ass off at the fact that Quackity got himself stuck in vines. It was the *one* moment where Sapnap actually cracked a genuine smile.

There wasn't truly trouble until they came down a nether rack hill outside the crimson forest and came close to not one, but *two* different ghasts that were floating past each other. And of course, they were detected. Dream gasped, curling his arms around George. The ghasts immediately started to screech and spit fireballs at them. Dream shouted, "Scatter!"

"Holy shit!" Karl gasped, not having seen a ghast in years. He was tackled out of the direct line of fire by Quackity. The force of the blast made them both roll on the ground a good distance away.

"Are you guys okay?!" Nikki gasped out.

"We're good," Quackity hissed as he pushed himself up on shaky arms. The ghasts continued to spit at the group and they hysterically jumped around, trying to find hiding spots.

"Try to hit the fireballs back at them!" Dream called out as he ducked behind a small hill with Sapnap and Antfrost. He watched Bad pull Skeppy to the side out of the range of fire and arm an arrow in his crossbow.

"That seems impossible Big D!" Tommy cried out, having almost gotten hit with a blast. Wilbur ground his teeth together, standing in front of Tommy and Nikki with his sword drawn. A bunch of the random prisoners were trying to duck or hide behind shields and little nether rack hills.

The ghasts both focused on one spot and spit two fireballs. Ranboo's eyes widened as he realized where the fireballs were heading. He turned and practically threw Tubbo over his shoulder, leaping down a small incline as Tubbo shrieked in surprise. Sapnap leaned down from where he was hiding with Antfrost and Dream to look at them with wide eyes, "Holy shit! You guys okay?!"

"I-I'm good," Tubbo gave a thumbs up to Sapnap despite Ranboo's shoulder digging into his

stomach painfully. He grinned at Ranboo, "Thanks buddy!"

"No problem...that jump wasn't good on my knees though," Ranboo chuckled briefly before slowly putting him down and pulling him to hide out of the line of fire.

"I can't hit those stupid fireballs!" Wilbur grunted as he nudged Nikki and Tommy towards an indent in the wall.

"That's only cause you're hesitating!" Dream called out to him and Wilbur felt annoyance run through him.

"Well why don't *you* try it then if it's so easy!?"

"I've done it before but I can't right now because I'm holding George!" Dream yelled, his eyebrow twitching behind his mask. Another part of him thought this whole thing was amusing if their lives weren't in danger by two ghosts.

"I can't get a good enough shot!" Bad cried out in frustration and Skeppy frowned. The ghosts stopped spitting towards Wilbur and Bad, suddenly turning their attention towards Quackity and Karl, both of whom had just gotten up from the ground as Fundy helped them.

"Karl! Guys watch out!!" Antfrost shrieked and the three turned and paled, barely leaping out of the way in time. The force of the two blasts that hit the ground caused them to stumble and hit the ground harshly. The ghosts immediately readied to shoot at them again.

"KARL! QUACKITY!" Sapnap shouted worriedly and Dream got ready to put George on the ground despite the heat and help them until the one of the ghosts suddenly shrieked in agony.

"What the fuck?!" Tommy gasped out as the ghost basically evaporated. Another arrow shot out and hit the other remaining ghost. It shrieked before disappearing and slowly everyone peeked their heads out of their hiding spots to look at where the arrow came from.

"That...was that you Bad?" Dream asked as they looked around warily. Bad frowned worriedly.

"No, I couldn't shoot them clearly with everything going on. That came from someone else," Bad explained as he and Skeppy stepped further out. Nikki spotted something up on a cliffside in the small distance.

"Oh my gosh!" She gasped, pointing her finger at where she was looking. She didn't have words for the stunning sight. Everyone quickly looked at where she was pointing. Someone stood on the cliff looking around intently until their eyes landed on their group.

Dream, Bad, Wilbur, Tommy, and Tubbo all sucked in a breath or gasped at the sight of the figure's pig-faced mask. Tommy cried out in relief, "It's *Techno*! TECHNOO!!!!"

"Oh thank God," Quackity gasped out as he leaned on Fundy and Karl, putting his arms around them. Fundy protested weakly trying to hold him up while Karl's eyes widened at the sight of Techno.

Techno's gaze zeroed in on where Tommy was shouting and he turned hastily, his mouth moving as if he were talking to someone but the group couldn't tell what he was saying. And then Wilbur's eyes widened when another figure joined Techno on the edge of the cliff. A man with a green and white hat he'd recognize anywhere and blonde hair stood next to Techno with a long grayish cape behind him that almost looked like wings.

Dream's eyes widened at the sight of them and he gasped when the blonde-haired male's eyes widened when he saw the group before he actually leapt off the cliff and opened up his cape to glide down to them. What the hell was *that*?! The blonde immediately ran at Tommy and Wilbur, throwing his arms around them tightly, "Are you guys both safe?!"

"A bit scratched up but otherwise okay Phil!" Wilbur laughed brightly, hugging back, "I can't believe you and Techno are here!"

"We've been scouting around the portal just in case Tommy or Tubbo came back for whatever reason," Phil explained and chuckled when Tommy wrestled out of his hug, "Techno's on his way down."

"It's so nice to meet you!" Skeppy grinned as he tugged Bad back into his side. Bad smiled, "We've heard a lot about you from Wilbur."

Dream, Sapnap, and Antfrost all got closer to hear everything being said. Phil smiled as he caught everyone's name and then jumped when Tommy gasped loudly, looking as if he forgot something. He looked around immediately, "Tubbo?!"

"We're down here!" Tubbo called and Tommy went running forward at once. He looked over the small incline and helped Tubbo climb back up before they both pulled Ranboo back up as well. Tubbo's eyes brightened, "Phil!!"

"Hello Tubbo," Phil chuckled after the tiny blonde hugged him then his eyes landed on Dream and George in his arms, "Is he alright?"

"No...he might have had a heatstroke," Dream explained quietly, studying Phil, "We need to get out of here..."

"Follow me," Phil said as his eyes hardened and his mouth tightened, "We'll get everyone treated once we're back in the overworld."

Everyone followed behind Phil with relief that they were almost out of the nether. They were lucky Techno and Phil were close by when the ghasts decided to attack them. Dream frowned and pulled George closer to his chest. George's skin was still kind of splotchy and he was still sweating, but not as much as before. His heart was still racing a little and Dream felt terrible for not being able to do anything to help him.

Phil lead them up an incline where they had to climb and once everyone reached the top, he lead them straight to where Techno was running at them at full speed. Tommy shrieked in shock when Techno basically body slammed him in some kind of unique hug that lasted maybe three seconds before he turned, eyeing Wilbur with a glint in his eyes.

Wilbur's eyes widened, "Uh, no Techno....no!"

Techno ignored him and body-slammed him as well as Phil laughed loudly. Nikki also giggled, half shocked at the way such an intimidating-looking guy like Techno hugged someone. Techno leaned back and his eyes widened behind his mask when he caught sight of Dream and Bad, "I figured I might be seeing you guys."

"It's so nice to see you again Techno!" Bad grinned with an open-mouth smile and Dream simply nodded in greeting. Techno eyed the way Sapnap shifted closer to Dream and how Bad had his arm in Skeppy's. Techno smirked.

"I see you found your loved ones. That's pog," He grinned out, leaving most of them confused at

the word while Wilbur, Tommy, and Tubbo laughed. Dream allowed a tiny grin when Sapnap's eyes widened as he looked between Techno and Dream while Skeppy chuckled, pulling Bad closer to him until Bad whined.

Phil smiled, "C'mon let's get everyone out of here. Looks like some of you need medical attention."

"Yeah no kidding," Karl sighed as he rubbed a cut on his arm. Sapnap's eyes bulged at the sight of it.

"When did you get hurt?!" Sapnap demanded, practically flying to his side. Karl let out hysterical laughs and Quackity joined him while Fundy looked incredulous.

"Fundy's sword accidentally nicked me when those ghasts blasted at us," Karl explained as everyone began following an amused Phil and Techno, "It's fine Sap..."

"Don't worry, we don't have long to walk before we get to the portal," Phil assured over his shoulder as he looked at Tommy, "You and Wil aren't hurt right? What happened by the way?"

"We're not hurt," Tommy grinned as he looked cocky, "And we all broke out and fought back against those pillagers! We totally took care of them!"

"Who did most of the work?" Dream muttered and Tommy glared at him while Sapnap, Antfrost, and Fundy laughed.

"That'd be *Ranboo*," Tubbo butt in and Ranboo jumped at suddenly being included. Dream blinked over at Tubbo before laughing for the first time in awhile.

"You're right," Dream grinned and Ranboo blushed when Techno and Phil studied him with wide eyes like they just noticed him.

"Whoa...you are quite a mysterious looking fellow aren't you?" Phil smiled, raising an eyebrow. Techno studied Ranboo with narrowed eyes.

Tubbo frowned when he noticed Ranboo getting nervous, "Don't stare at him like that, Techno! He's my friend now!"

Techno rose an eyebrow in silent amusement while Tommy rolled his eyes, "Tubbo, you adopt everyone as your friend I swear...."

"*Jealous*," Skeppy coughed under his breath while Bad and Nikki giggled. Wilbur choked back a laugh as Tommy glared over at them.

"Is that the portal?!" Fundy shouted, startling some of them, especially Quackity by how loud he was. His eyes were wide. They all turned to study the way ahead of them and, sure enough, there was a portal up on the hill in the small distance. Dream felt his heart stutter excitedly at the sight and he pushed George's body closer to his, curling his arms around him desperately. So close....

"Let's *go*!" Quackity and Karl cheered simultaneously while Antfrost rose an eyebrow at how in sync they just were.

"Follow me. Once we get through the portal I'll lead you to the small army I brought with me," Techno spoke, his voice annoyingly monotone, "We'll get you all settled in and treat those injuries."

"You actually brought a small army?" Wilbur asked in amusement and Techno smirked in

response.

"Yes. It's too bad that I didn't get to fight anyone," Techno sighed, looking genuinely put off. Tubbo and Tommy laughed at the expression.

"You aren't the only one. I had such plans," Phil sighed out as he shook his head playfully, "I'll go through last just to make sure everyone makes it through the portal okay."

Techno nodded seriously before turning to Dream, "Follow behind me directly Dream and I'll take you to our town's healer. He came with and will be able to help George."

Dream blinked before looking relieved, "Okay. Great..."

Dream was glad they had someone with them that knew what they were doing because Dream wasn't sure how to treat someone that may or may not have had a heatstroke. He only knew that they needed to be cooled down. Dream looked down at George in his arms and rubbed his thumb along George's arm. While everyone else was chatting or cheering, Dream whispered, hoping George could somehow hear him, "Don't worry, George. You'll be okay I'll make *sure* of it. I got you...."

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so, I was LIVING for all those little moments with everyone. You don't even know! Also...the way Techno straight up "techno-planed" his brothers in a hug!!!!
Yes!

It was a bit difficult to make sure I kept up with everyone without having too many unnecessary details. I struggle with that as a writer so I hope I did everyone justice! I also kind of struggle with fight scenes... 🤔😓

Anyways, any comments and feedback are appreciated! I always make sure to reply!
Love you guys and I hope you have a really good weekend!

Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

George gets treated, the others meet more of Techno's people, and Dream learns a lot.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I took a little bit of a break which didn't feel like much of a break since I work. Any-who, thank you so much for your continued support! I love reading all your comments and seeing the kudos/bookmarks going up is a pleasure!

IMPORTANT TO NOTE: With this story I AM NOT strictly following any Dream SMP plotline, so I don't want anyone to expect that. I do take inspiration and aspects of certain things that happened in the Dream SMP and put it in the story but not everything is going to relate to the SMP. I just wanted to address this because I've gotten questions about it.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream nearly lost his grip on George as soon as he stepped through the nether portal. He'd forgotten the intense dizziness and nausea he felt the first time he went through a nether portal. As he clenched his eyes shut, his arms curled around George to make sure he didn't drop him.

Despite the dizziness, Dream could already feel the coolness in the air. He didn't realize how warm he was until they'd stepped through the portal. Someone took a deep breath by his side and sighed, "W-Wow...I don't remember it being *this* bad..."

Dream chuckled, opening his eyes to glance at Sapnap by his side with a squint. Sapnap was holding his head in one hand. Karl was by his side, holding onto Sapnap like he was the only thing keeping Karl up. Dream looked around and noticed almost everyone looked like they were affected the same except for Ranboo.

Ranboo was watching Tubbo and Tommy worriedly. Dream was briefly intrigued that Ranboo wasn't affected at all but he looked away when he heard someone shuffle closer to him. He glanced up to see Techno stepping forward and Dream realized he was looking off towards somewhere else.

Dream looked up, straightening slightly when he realized they were in a big open plains field with little to no trees. There were multiple people walking around through numerous insanely large tents. Dream's eyes widened and he heard some of his friends gasp or whisper amongst themselves.

"Phil," Techno called as he turned to look behind the group where Phil was standing there silently, "Can you get some of the others to start setting up more tents for our new people here? Then can you settle them in?"

"Sure," Phil grinned, his eyes briefly flicking over everyone before he moved. Dream blinked when Techno then turned to him.

"Follow me, Dream," Techno urged him as he scowled and Dream simply nodded. He trusted Techno enough that he didn't think Techno would hurt any of them. Not on purpose anyway.

He followed Techno as he walked closer to the obvious camp. Dream rose an eyebrow but didn't comment when he turned his head to see Sapnap, Bad, and Skeppy following behind him with frowns on their faces. Techno led them to a big beige tent and immediately went inside. Dream followed him, his arms beginning to feel the effects of carrying George for as long as he had.

There was a black-skinned male standing there in a white coat. He seemed startled when he turned to see them all standing there. Dream was briefly surprised by the red, yellow, and black mask that covered nearly all of the male's face except his dark brown eyes. It really stood out since he was wearing white.

"Ponk, these are some of the newcomers that came with Wilbur," Techno explained in that monotone voice of his. The man, Ponk, rose an eyebrow as his eyes shifted from studying Dream's masked face to George in his arms, "This is Dream and his friends. And that's George. Will you treat him?"

Ponk seemed slightly caught off guard but then he smiled, "Of course. Can you lay him down on the cot?"

Dream nodded and stepped forward to the white bedding, gently placing George down. He stepped back when Ponk came around to give him space. This also gave him the opportunity to look around. There were three other white cots in the tent and a table full of what looked like potions and ingredients as well as bandages.

"Ponk's our best cleric," Techno said aloud and Dream realized Techno was speaking to him specifically, "So George is in good hands. I'm going to go help Phil now."

"Well thanks for that," Ponk laughed, grinning slightly as Techno left the tent before he turned to Dream with a more serious expression, "Can you tell me his symptoms?"

Dream immediately went into detail about where George was kept and Bad finally broke his silence by admitting he also thought George had a heatstroke. Ponk hummed in response, his eyes scanning the red splotches on George's chest and thighs.

"Will he be alright?" Sapnap asked anxiously, shuffling his feet. Skeppy was right beside him, looking torn between moving around and pulling Bad back to his side.

"I'll make sure of it," Ponk reassured, his eyes never leaving George, "He's severely dehydrated but I can give him fluids that'll solve that no problem. His body temperature is really high which is causing his skin to break out in these splotches. Almost like heat rashes if you will."

"Those will go away if we lower his body temperature, right?" Bad asked quietly, looking down at George with worry. Ponk blinked, looking over at Bad.

"That's right. Are you a cleric too?" Ponk questioned, tilting his head. Bad seemed surprised by that.

"Well no...I know a few things but I'm a librarian..." Bad smiled politely and Ponk's eyes widened slightly.

"Interesting...." He trailed off before leaning back to walk over to the table. He grabbed a clear bag and started filling it with liquids. Then Ponk glanced at Dream, "Dream, wasn't it? Can you hand me that metal stand behind you there?"

Dream looked behind him to see two thin metal stands with hooks attached to the ends. He silently moved it around towards Ponk and watched as he attached the clear bag of liquids to it. There was a plastic tube attached to the end of the bag and Dream watched with curiosity as Ponk attached the other end to a needle and walked over to George.

Sensing his stare, Ponk turned and smiled, "This contains the fluids I was talking about. It's something I invented myself to treat dehydrated patients. It has certain vitamins in it."

"Fascinating," Bad gasped out even though Ponk was talking to Dream. Dream felt a smirk grow on his face when Bad blushed like he didn't mean to say that out loud. Skeppy chuckled, slowly moving closer to Bad.

"When will he wake up?" Sapnap asked intently, his eyes going from Ponk to George every so often. Ponk's expression softened.

"Once his body temperature and heart rate go back to normal, I'd say a few hours," Ponk explained and Dream felt immediate relief hit him. They weren't too late to save George. He was going to be alright.

"Thank God..." Sapnap sighed, his body slowly losing tension.

Ponk leaned back after inserting the needle into the inside of George's elbow. He eventually

grabbed a bowl of cool water and two sponges. Bad immediately offered to help Ponk wipe down George's body. Dream tensed and Ponk must have misunderstood his tenseness because he explained, "Sponging his body with cool water will be the quickest way to bring down his body temperature."

Dream silently nodded, willing the funny feeling in his chest to go away as he watched both Ponk and Bad rub sponges across George's pale skin. He felt someone staring at him and looked over, raising his eyebrow behind his mask when he crossed stares with Sapnap.

Sapnap gave him a thoughtful stare before he smiled a little, "This doesn't feel real to me yet..."

"You mean...being out?" Dream asked, frowning a bit. Sapnap nodded, looking around blankly, "You'll get used to it no time."

"Yeah..." Sapnap trailed off, glancing over his shoulder, "I wonder what the others are doing..."

"Probably having the time of their life exploring this camp," Dream shrugged, going silent when Ponk set aside the bowl of water and pulled a thin blanket halfway up George's body.

"I've done what I can. His body temperature is already starting to come down," Ponk explained as he turned to Dream and Sapnap, "You are more than welcome to stay in here with him but I better go see who else I need to treat."

"Thanks doc," Sapnap grinned a little, "I have another friend named Karl. He had a cut on his skin that might need stitches."

Ponk laughed a little, grabbing a small brown bag and throwing it over his shoulder, "I'll look out for him then. If you need me then come search for me."

"Thanks," Dream replied as he nodded. Ponk smiled once more before leaving the tent. Bad and Skeppy shared a look.

"I think we're going to go find out where we're staying tonight," Skeppy said as he grinned, grabbing Bad's hand in his. Dream smiled at the sight.

"You'll tell me when he wakes up, right Dream?" Bad asked, shooting George another worried look, "I wanna be there when he wakes up!"

"I'll get you when he wakes up, don't worry," Dream chuckled, feeling a bit warm at seeing Bad's obvious concern for George. Bad smiled before allowing Skeppy to pull him out of the tent.

Dream turned to Sapnap after it was just them, "Come here."

"What?" Sapnap tilted his head in confusion. Dream moved to another cot close to George's and patted it with his hand.

"Sit here for a sec," Dream ordered and Sapnap rose an eyebrow but stayed silent as he did what Dream ordered. Dream turned to grab a white strip of cloth and dipped it in the cool water.

"What are you doing?" Sapnap questioned, still confused as Dream turned around and walked closer to Sapnap. He went silent again when Dream grabbed one of his arms and began wiping the dried blood around scratch marks Sapnap made on himself the night before.

"I'm sorry, Pandas," Dream muttered, feeling a new wave of guilt as he stared at the marks on his friend's arms that matched the ones on his face.

Sapnap startled, his eyes widening at the use of his old nickname, "What?"

"If I hadn't froze up back then, you know, when our village was attacked...we might have been able to get away together and you wouldn't have been captured," Dream murmured sourly.

"Oh..." Sapnap frowned, hating the look he knew his friend had behind the mask, "Dream I never blamed you. Not for *one* second, you know that right?"

"I know..." Dream trailed off, though his shoulders lost some of their tension. Sapnap's frown deepened.

"If you really think it's your fault then you already redeemed yourself by looking for me all this time," Sapnap said pointedly and surprised Dream by grabbing the cloth out of his hands to wipe his wounds himself, "I know these scratches say otherwise but I'm not so fragile dude."

Dream snorted in amusement, "Right...I just needed to say that I guess."

"I get it," Sapnap replied quietly, staring anywhere but at Dream as he began wiping his face.

Dream turned back to George after that and grabbed a sponge from the bowl of cool water. He squeezed some excess water from it before gently rubbing George's forehead with it. He continued to do this with his neck and chest and was happy that the red splotches were already fading a bit.

"Dream, can I ask you something?" Sapnap asked behind him and Dream nodded, wiping down George's chest, "Are you in love with George or something?"

Dream choked on his own breath, dropping the sponge on George's chest accidentally. His eyes widened and he turned to Sapnap, who was watching him carefully, "W-Why?"

"It's kind of obvious," Sapnap grinned a little, "The way you act when he's mentioned and the way you were acting since we've gotten out."

"How is that obvious?" Dream asked with narrowed eyes, "I didn't do anything out of the ordinary..."

"Dude your arms would almost be shaking but you wouldn't ask anyone else to hold George," Sapnap rolled his eyes, "And friends don't look at each other the way you look at George. You also seemed jealous earlier when Ponk was rubbing George down with a sponge."

Dream flushed red against his will and scowled when Sapnap chuckled. Sapnap smiled at Dream, "You know it doesn't matter to me right? I think it's great that you're in love with George!"

"You do?" Dream asked, confused. Sapnap rose an eyebrow.

"Uh, yes. I'm not homophobic you know," Sapnap scoffed and Dream chuckled once at the look on his face, "And it's great because I think George is in love with you too."

Dream's heart skipped a couple of beats and he felt nervous fluttering in his stomach. And then memories of George crept in. Dream frowned slightly, "How much do you know about George, Sapnap?"

Sapnap rose an eyebrow, "What do you mean?"

"He pretty much grew up on his own without friends...he basically raised himself," Dream said with a scowl. Sapnap's eyes widened as he looked over at George.

"I knew a little bit...but wow," Sapnap frowned, his eyes narrowing.

"Yeah...I've talked to Bad about my feelings for George but..." Dream stopped, sighing loudly, "George finally has friends, people that care about him. I don't want to overwhelm him by trying to approach him romantically. I don't even know if he likes guys or not Sapnap..."

Sapnap's eyes widened further, "That's heavy stuff man...."

"Right," Dream rolled his eyes.

"You know the only way to know for *sure* is to ask him, right?" Sapnap retorted, raising an

eyebrow.

"I know but...I can't just *spring* it on him! And if I just randomly question if he likes guys then he'll want to know why I asked!" Dream stressed, freaking out slightly as he imagined it in his head.

"Okay, look," Sapnap started, looking a bit concerned now that Dream was freaking out, "You've got time. There's no rush!"

Dream let out a slow breath, automatically feeling calmer, "Right...no rush...things don't have to change so quickly, right?"

"Right," Sapnap grinned, relieved that his friend appeared calmer.

They both jumped when someone entered the tent with a loud flapping-noise before calming when they noticed it was just Techno. Sapnap still felt that Techno was intimidating with his royal-like appearance and pig-faced mask.

"He seems better already," Techno commented, gesturing to George. Dream nodded slowly, staring at Techno. He turned to look at Dream and Sapnap again, "We're still setting up more tents for your friends. However, I'd like you both to follow me so I can introduce you to some loyal partners of mine."

Dream immediately felt intrigued but also hesitant to leave George alone. Before he could even voice this aloud, Ponk came into the tent, freezing momentarily when he noticed Techno there, "Fine. We'll come with you."

"Where are you going?" Ponk asked, raising an eyebrow.

"I'm going to introduce them to some friends," Techno replied mysteriously.

"Can you stay with him until we get back?" Dream asked intently and Ponk just smiled, nodding his head. Dream cast one last worried look at George before following Techno out with Sapnap silently on his heels.

"Not that I mind but, why is it so important to meet these people now?" Sapnap asked and Dream was kind of glad he did. He had the same question in mind after all.

Techno chuckled deeply, "You want to stay in my town, right? Then you should want to meet people with important roles in said town."

"Right..." Sapnap blushed a little out of embarrassment. He didn't think of it that way before.

Dream just felt curious. People with important roles? He wondered how many of those there were in Techno's town since it was so prosperous.

Dream was brought out of his thoughts when they came walking up on a familiar group of people. He immediately recognized them as the friends he escaped with.

"Sapnap!!!" Karl cried out dramatically while Quackity laughed.

"Karl! Quackity!" Sapnap cried out just as dramatically, running up to hug both of them. Dream watched with interest. Karl and Quackity were in the same hall of cells with Sapnap, so he was obviously really close with them.

"How's George?!"

Dream jumped, turning halfway to face a worried-looking Ranboo. Ranboo was such an intimidating person, more than himself and Techno. He was just so *tall* he was basically a giant. He recognized Tubbo and Tommy hovering behind Ranboo.

"George is going to be okay," Dream said slowly and blinked in surprise when numerous people in the group sighed with relief. It caused something warm to stir in his heart that even some of them that have only heard about George but haven't met him yet could be so worried for him.

"I knew he would be!" Bad grinned from Skeppy's side. Skeppy sent Dream a smile that could mean anything really and Dream smiled back.

"Now that everyone's here, who are we supposed to be meeting?" Nikki's soft voice spoke up, looking between Wilbur at her side and Techno.

"Phil is bringing them here," Techno explained in a simple tone.

"Don't worry, they're all amazing!" Tubbo grinned brightly and Tommy rolled his eyes.

"Well one of 'em is pretty sus," Tommy muttered under his breath but Dream heard him all the same, raising an eyebrow at the chaotic blonde.

"I'm bad with names," Antfrost complained and Fundy laughed, patting his back.

"Me too but oh well, right?" Fundy retorted, looking too excited about being free to give a crap about anything else. Ant chuckled.

"Ah, here they come," Techno announced and Dream noticed a lot of his friends went rigid. He

tensed as well though he didn't feel worried. Distantly he felt that he should make a good first impression since he wanted to stay in Techno's town, village, whatever it was...but Dream was never really good at first impressions.

Phil came into view with three people walking behind him. Once he reached Techno's side he shifted out of the way. The three people immediately began studying each and every one of them. One was a woman with long curly chestnut brown hair and a pair of black glasses on top of her head. She was wearing diamond armor and underneath that it appeared that she wore a rainbow colored sweater. It was very distracting.

The man on her left had tan skin, blue eyes, and short dark brown hair. He also had a small beard around his mouth and chin. By his side stood another male and Dream's eyes widened slightly when he noticed the man's eyes were actually purple. He had purple eyes, dark tan skin, and dark dirty-blonde hair.

Dream watched as all of their eyes widened at the sight of him before they actually tensed up at the sight of Ranboo. He noticed Ranboo tense up as well, huddling in on himself like he was trying to disappear. A surge of empathy welled in him.

"This is Ranboo!" Tubbo said loudly. The suddenness startled everyone *including* Techno, which made Phil laugh into his fist, desperately trying to conceal it.

"Jesus, Tubbo. You blew my damn ear out!" Tommy complained, mainly because he felt embarrassed to be so caught off guard. Techno could relate.

"Language!" Bad cried out, making Skeppy chuckle under his breath.

"Oops, sorry," Tubbo grinned, not looking apologetic in the slightest. Wilbur shook his head, smirking.

"Anyways," Phil drawled, clearing his throat after Techno frowned at him for laughing at him. He turned to the three strangers, "I'll introduce these guys. The woman is Captain Puffy. She's the captain of our security guard back at home."

The woman, Puffy, brightened and smiled eagerly at them all. Dream was a bit intrigued that this woman was apparently a good enough fighter to be a captain of anything.

"This is Hbomb," Phil introduce the male to her left. The one with the beard, "He's our farmer but he also a good fighter and volunteered for this mission when he heard what happened."

Hbomb grinned, waving his hand. Wilbur snickered, "You came to save me, Hbomb?"

"You know it, Wil," Hbomb winked, laughing after he did. Dream heard Sapnap and Karl snicker

by his side.

Phil rolled his eyes before gesturing to the final male, "This here is Purpled. He's our armor smith *and* one of our best warriors."

Purpled nodded his head politely, still studying everyone. Phil directed everyone to introduce themselves one at a time for Puffy, Purpled, and Hbomb. Dream waited until last to introduce himself, "My name is Dream..."

"Nice mask," Puffy said with a teasing smile on her face, "Not something you'd expect someone to be wearing."

Dream just smiled, not sure what to say to that. Tommy blurted, "Have you seen Ponk's mask? I wasn't too surprised when I saw Dream's weird mask."

Dream rolled his eyes, remembering how Tommy and the others reacted to seeing him wear it for the first time. Techno cleared his throat, "Puffy, I already broke the nether portal so we couldn't be followed just in case but to be safe will you assign some guards to it?"

"Already on it," Puffy nodded, grinning as she turned to the others, "See you guys around!"

"Bye..." Nikki waved and Puffy beamed at her friendliness before skipping off. Techno turned to the other two, "Hbomb, Purpled, will you help the others finish putting up tents for our newcomers?"

"Sure," Hbomb grinned, giving a thumbs up, "I also can't wait to get to know everyone more."

"Same here," Quackity grinned back. Purpled stayed quiet but he didn't look tense or put off so Dream figured that he was just a quiet type of person. Or he wasn't comfortable speaking too much with them yet. He could understand what that's like.

"Before you all leave," Techno called, making everyone silent, "We'll be questioning each of you individually just as protocol for entry to the town. I should be able to accept each and every one of you unless you have some terrible crime hidden in your past."

"Woo!!" Karl cheered, his face bright. Sapnap and Quackity laughed.

"I can't wait to finally be in a town again!" Fundy grinned eagerly and everyone began cheering amongst themselves. Dream noticed Phil watching them all with a sad smile on his face.

Dream glanced at Techno, catching his eye, "I'm gonna head back to George now."

Techno rose an eyebrow at him but didn't comment, "Alright. Phil and I will probably be by to question you later."

"Okay," Dream shrugged, turning to walk off the way he came. He couldn't help but feel worried the longer he was away from George. What if he woke up all alone and confused? Dream wanted to be there when he woke up.

He heard someone behind him and glanced over his shoulder, grinning when he saw Sapnap keeping pace with him. Sapnap looked much better than he had before. The dried blood was gone from his face and his scratches looked better already. And he actually had a content look to his face.

"George won't believe all this when he wakes up!" Sapnap commented from nowhere as he looked up and crossed gazes with Dream.

Dream laughed, "No, he'll freak out. That's why I wanna be there when he wakes up."

"Me too," Sapnap said as his smile slowly fell, "Plus I'm worried about what those bastards told him when they put him in the sweatbox."

Dream nearly froze mid-walk. That wasn't something that occurred to him. What had George thought when he was forced into that room? Did they say anything to him or did they say nothing to him at all?

"We'll just put his worries to rest then," Dream scowled, feeling anger rise up in his chest, "He doesn't have to worry about them anymore..."

"Yeah," Sapnap replied quietly, "Are you going to tell Techno about that guy's warning from before? And the fact that there's a pillager base here in the overworld?"

"I will eventually," Dream sighed out, feeling tired just thinking about it, "Right now we just need to focus on *us*. Those pillagers aren't able to do much now anyways."

"True," Sapnap hummed and they went quiet when they reached the beige tent. Dream opened it, relieved when he saw Ponk sitting next to George, who wasn't awake yet.

Dream walked over to George's other side as Ponk greeted them. He was delighted when he noticed the red splotches on his milky pale skin all gone. Ponk smiled, "Welcome back. I gave him another sponge bath to continue to cool him. His heart rate is normal now and his body temperature is almost normal as well."

"That's great!" Sapnap beamed, getting closer to the cot by George's feet.

"Yes it is," Ponk grinned, "Now that you are back I need to go for a bit. If anything changes then send for me, okay?"

"Alright. Thanks," Dream said genuinely and Ponk just continued to grin as he slid out of the tent.

"I like him. He seems pretty cool," Sapnap snickered, "I always imagined clerics as old dudes with no life though."

"Stereotypical, Sapnap," Dream rolled his eyes and Sapnap broke out into laughter.

For the next thirty minutes, Dream and Sapnap got comfortable and talked about little things while they waited for George to wake up. Dream thought of something to ask, "Hey...is there something you're wanting to do?"

Sapnap blinked over at him, caught off guard, "What do ya mean?"

"I mean in Techno's village," Dream licked his lips that were dry, "Is there something you want to do occupation wise? I feel like that's a question that he'll ask..."

Sapnap's eyes widened briefly before he hummed, thinking it over, "Honestly...well this'll sound so self-deprecating but...all I'm good for is fighting."

Dream scowled, "Shut up. That's not all you're good for."

"I don't mean to diss myself," Sapnap gave him a look, "It's true though. It's the only thing I'm good at and I like it when I have a say in it..."

Dream frowned, "I understand that...so you want to be a warrior?"

"Basically," Sapnap shrugged before he glanced at Dream, "What about you? You're good at fighting too..."

"Yeah..." Dream trailed off, looking at the ground in thought, "I want to work up in the ranks of his warriors."

"It's weird thinking about you serving under someone," Sapnap said, wrinkling his nose, "I've always pictured you a leader of your own group."

"I have trouble following other people's orders," Dream admitted with a small smirk, "But I can make it work. It won't be that big of an issue."

"Hmmm, true," Sapnap grinned, "And apparently you can do other things and still be a warrior...like that Hbomb dude. You wouldn't think he's a warrior and a farmer at the same time!"

"I was thinking the same," Dream chuckled, "But maybe that's just because they do things differently there. It's actually a relief to know you don't have to stick to just one thing."

"*Very* true," Sapnap said with an eager look to his eyes.

They both straightened when they heard running outside the tent. Dream nearly jumped when Karl came flying into the tent, out of breath. Sapnap jumped to attention immediately, "Karl, is something wrong?!"

"Oh...no s-sorry," Karl laughed, sounding out of breath, "I just came running to look for you Sapnap."

"Why?" Sapnap asked, looking confused as he tilted his head. Karl straightened, taking a deep breath before looking to Sapnap again.

"So, um, they're still putting up tents and they finished one for me. They're putting two people to a tent but um....both Quackity and I are used to sleeping with *you* close by."

Sapnap's eyes widened in recognition, "Oh..."

Karl looked mildly embarrassed, "Yeah...so we were wondering if you'd sleep in our tent with us so we can all be more comfortable? B-But I understand if you want to sleep with Dream!"

Dream immediately snorted, unable to help himself with how that sounded. Sapnap shot him a look though his own mouth wobbled and turned to Karl gently, "Sure, of course Karl."

Karl brightened, "Thanks Sap! It just felt so weird since we've slept close to each other for so long..."

"I understand, Karl. I hadn't even thought of it," Sapnap grinned, "Need help setting things up?"

"Actually that'd be a huge help," Karl laughed, fixing his hair, "We've almost got our tent ready on the inside."

"Well if I'm sleeping there it's got to pass my standards," Sapnap joked and Karl laughed. Sapnap turned to Dream, "Get me if you need me or if he wakes up?"

Dream watched them in amusement, "Sure Sap..."

Sapnap and Karl walked out of the tent together and Dream watched Sapnap listen to Karl talk with a warm look in his eyes that left him wondering if Sapnap had more than friendship feelings towards Karl. He made a mental note to ask him about it another time. He could be reading into that one look too much.

Dream glanced at George and felt a pang in his chest at the thought that George might not wake up before everyone went to sleep. If that were the case Dream doubted that he could sleep anywhere else.

Several minutes passed, Dream wasn't sure exactly how long, when he heard more than one person shuffle closer to the tent. He watched silently, his eyes widening when Techno and Philza stepped through.

"Where's Sapnap?" Techno asked, looking around the tent.

"He went with Karl to help him set up his tent," Dream answered, watching as they both sat on the cot across from him and George. Philza had a pen and notebook of some kind in his hands, "What's that for?"

Phil smiled, "This just has some notes for record. We've already questioned some of your friends and I'm writing down anything noteworthy."

Dream didn't say anything. He wasn't sure exactly what they considered to be noteworthy. Techno looked at him with seriousness, "Is now a good time for you to answer some routine questions?"

Dream appreciated the thoughtful question and nodded, "Guess so. I'm doing nothing but waiting for George to wake up."

Techno nodded, "Alright then. First off, can you tell me where you are from in as many details as you can recall?"

"I'm from a small village that was in a plain's biome. I can't remember exactly *where*. It's been burned to ashes anyway," Dream muttered with renewed anger. Something like contempt flashed through Philza's eyes at that.

"I see," Techno frowned but didn't comment further. Dream was glad for that, "Obviously this next question is one you can simply lie yourself away but I have to ask....do you have a criminal past?"

"No..." Dream answered hesitantly, "I'm not wanted for bounty or anything and the only people I've killed were for self-defense reasons."

Techno's mouth quirked in a smile for a second before it was gone while Philza began writing something in his notebook, "Okay, excellent. And, to be clear, you *are* interested in staying at my village right? As in a permanent residency?"

"Yes..." Dream answered, his eyes briefly flicking to George and remembering how excited George had been knowing they had somewhere to go after everything. He smiled a little. George would be so happy.

"Okay, awesome. And considering your skills, what would you say you'd want to do there?" Techno asked intently, studying Dream's masked face.

Dream resisted the urge to smirk. He *knew* that was gonna be a question. Good thing he'd already thought of it, "Well, I have significant experience as a warrior. I'd like to be a fighter and maybe I can teach others some skills...I also know how to make armor though I'm not the best at it."

"Amazing," Philza grinned, something warm settling in his gaze, "You'd be able to pursue both if you wanted. Though if you become a warrior that'd take precedence and the other thing would be something you learn on the side."

"Makes sense," Dream grinned back, his heart thudding in excitement at the confirmation that he doesn't have to limit himself to just one thing.

"Alright, final question," Techno leaned back, looking from Philza to Dream again, "Is there *anything* about you that we should know about?"

Dream hesitated, not wanting to come off as a bad person, "Well, to be honest with you...I don't do well with authority figures and I don't like being ordered or bossed around."

"You have that in common with this one here," Philza barked out a laugh as he pointed his thumb in Techno's direction. Dream's eyes widened as Techno rolled his eyes. Well, that makes sense now that Dream thinks about it. He immediately felt relief that he wasn't the only one.

"Don't worry too much about that," Techno said with a small smirk on his face, "Of course, you'll have people above you but as long as you're not blatantly disrespectful or do anything that brings harm to others then you're fine as you are."

Dream sighed in more relief, "Okay, awesome.....is that all?"

"Pretty much. You're approved for trial in my village," Techno grinned and Dream looked up, "It's a two-week trial period that's mainly for my purposes to see how you do living in the village. Once it's over you can decide to leave if you want, of course. If I see anything concerning during the two weeks then I'll ask you to leave. That's how it works."

Dream blinked, surprised, "Sounds....pretty reasonable."

"Yup...it's saved us a *lot* of grief," Philza said seriously, something entering his eyes. Dream figured he must be remembering something he didn't like.

"Wilbur mentioned how you came up with this process," Dream spoke up, wondering if he was crossing a boundary he shouldn't. Techno and Philza looked at him in surprise, "I mean, it makes sense and all, but I'm curious because of what you just said....has there been a problem in the past?"

Techno and Philza exchanged a hardened stare. Dream immediately felt that he shouldn't have asked. Techno then turned to stare at Dream like he was trying to decide on something, "I think it's safe to tell him. He's a leader type and I feel like he should know, just in *case*."

"It's your call Techno. Besides...I feel like he's trustworthy too," Philza said as he looked at Dream then to Techno. Dream rose an eyebrow.

"You can tell me to buzz off. I'm just curious. I don't want to step on anyone's toes here," Dream frowned and Techno eyed him once more before sighing.

"It's not exactly a *secret*..." Techno sighed out before glaring at Dream, "Once I tell you the story though I don't want you spreading it around. And don't you *dare* ever bring it up around Tubbo."

Dream startled, "Tubbo?"

"Yeah, we'll get to that," Philza frowned, looking thoughtful, "So the reason we have this process is because someone once betrayed over village....in a sense."

"What do you mean?" Dream asked, his eyes widening.

"There was this guy that didn't like the way things were run in my village," Techno said roughly, his eyes narrowing, "He had his own ideas about how things should be run and handled. He tried to have me killed and tried to overthrow our king-in-name."

"Hold up," Dream felt whiplash by the sudden information, "Wilbur mentioned that too, once, that there was a 'king in name'. What does that mean exactly? Aren't *you* the leader?"

"Yes but I'm *only* the leader because everyone looks at me that way. There is a King that rules over the territory. He's descended from the family that's always ruled over that territory. His name is Eret," Techno explained slowly, "I'm the actual leader I guess...I don't really like being called that but everyone looks to me to make decisions. Eret's the king in name and he helps me run things."

"Oh...I see now," Dream said, his eyes lighting up in understanding, "And the traitor you were talking about...?"

"His name is Schlatt," Philza interjected with a dark frown on his face. It was obvious Philza didn't like this guy very much. Neither did Techno, "Techno and Eret exiled him after he tried to kill Techno and overthrow Eret. No one really understands what Schlatt was thinking. I personally think he got too drunk on power."

Dream nodded, frowning, "What does that have to do with Tubbo?"

Philza and Techno exchanged another glance before Techno replied heavily, "To be clear, minors are lawfully required to have a guardian living with them until they turn 18."

"It's like that in most places," Dream nodded in agreement and his eyes widened as a thought occurred to him.

"Well, Tubbo is kind of mystery. He came to our town on his own with no parents. When we questioned him he said he had no living relatives and he refused to open up and tell us where he was from. It was obvious to us that he experienced something awful so we didn't force him to tell us," Techno explained.

"Schlatt was still a citizen when Tubbo arrived and offered to adopt him. Everyone was sort of surprised by that because Schlatt wasn't the type of guy to want to be around kids...but he saw something he liked in Tubbo and was very nice to him. As nice as he's capable of anyway," Phil commented, rolling his eyes at the end.

Techno's expression twisted, "After Schlatt betrayed us it was clear that Tubbo had *no* idea Schlatt had those intentions. Tubbo felt betrayed and confused by Schlatt's actions. When I chose to exile Schlatt, he said that he would agree to that and not fight it only on the condition that he could come around to see Tubbo every now and again in a designated place."

Dream's eyes widened, "Wow..."

Phil frowned, "Yeah...we were worried that he was going to use Tubbo to do something but nothing like that's happened so far and its been two years since his exile. He comes around to see Tubbo now and again as well as give him gifts. It's his way of caring for Tubbo I suppose."

"Our relations have improved with Schlatt a little due to that but we can't trust him to live in the

village again," Techno said seriously, "Schlatt mainly stays away for Tubbo's benefit I think but I can't speak for his intentions."

"I honestly don't know how Tubbo's handled that," Dream commented, frowning as he thought about it. Philza and Techno scowled.

"The *only* person Tubbo ever opens up to is Tommy," Phil sighed lightly, looking sad, "Even then I don't know if Tommy knows where Tubbo comes from."

Dream thought back on Tommy's odd worry about Tubbo back at the prison as well as Tubbo's words about going through something similar as they all had.

Dream shrugged, "He might...if I were Tubbo I wouldn't want it talked about."

"Right," Techno nodded and he slowly stood, "Anyways, don't spread the story around. It's already got rumors back at the village."

"I won't say anything," Dream said seriously and Techno stared at him for a moment before nodding.

"We need to go question some of the others now," Phil said as he smiled a little, "Come get one of us if you have questions."

"Thanks, I will," Dream nodded and watched silently as they filed out of the tent. He let out a huge sigh and relaxed, glancing at George's face. Even though he was the one that asked he felt like he'd just learned much more than he anticipated.

Sapnap returned almost an hour later and told Dream how he'd also been questioned along with Quackity and Karl. Sapnap laughed happily as he told Dream how Techno couldn't wait to spar with them to see just how deep their skills with a blade went. Dream wanted to roll his eyes if he weren't excited at the idea of sparring with Technoblade himself.

"They're almost done setting up the tents," Sapnap told him with a grin on his face, "They're not bad at all. A lot bigger than I was expecting. They also have this really big one set up in the center of camp!"

"Really?" Dream asked, raising an eyebrow. He couldn't recall paying all that much attention, "Interesting..."

"Yeah, I think a lot of the others decided to go hangout there," Sapnap said shrugging one shoulder as he shifted to get comfortable, "It's amazing seeing everyone this content..."

Dream smiled at the faraway look in Sapnap's eyes, "Yeah. I'm glad everything worked out."

Sapnap turned to fix him with a stare but he was smiling, "Thanks for not giving up on the idea of

escaping. I don't think I could have ever mustered up the courage again..."

Dream wanted to frown at that but he didn't let himself. Instead he smirked playfully, "Only the best for the homies, right?"

Sapnap looked startled before throwing his head back and laughing joyously, "That's right baby!"

Sapnap was still laughing and he snorted loudly in his laughter, making Dream start laughing so hard he wheezed, something he felt like he hadn't done in so long. Sapnap looked even more caught off guard at his laughter and began pounding on the empty cot he was lying against, turning red in the face from how hard he was laughing, "W-What the heck dude you *still* sound like a tea kettle after all this time!"

Dream just shook his head, hugging himself as he wheezed, leaning against the cot George was on like it was the only thing keeping him upright. Eventually, though, their laughter began to die down. The sound of shuffling caught Dream's attention and he glanced over at the tent's entrance automatically, but he didn't see any signs of someone about to enter.

"Did you hear that Sapnap?" Dream questioned, looking towards his friend that was calming down from his laughter.

"Dude, no..." Sapnap inhaled deeply, "I was too busy dying. What was it?"

Dream rolled his eyes, "Maybe it was nothing then...."

It wasn't until he felt something touch his arm that he jumped and looked down. George's chocolate-brown eyes were open half-way and were a bit hazy from sleep. His gaze was narrowed in on Dream's mask in a squint, "D-Dream...?"

Sapnap gasped, the sound of it loud against the sudden silence that followed George's voice. Dream quickly turned all the way around and grabbed onto George's hand, the one that hit against his arm. He felt his eyes tear up, "George! You're finally awake!"

George blinked at him slowly, his other hand coming up to rub between his eyes. Sapnap took to George's other side, his eyes wide and his face almost pale. George had yet to notice him though. Dream squeezed his hand, "George, you okay?"

"I-I think so?" George replied, sounding uncertain even as he said it. Dream frowned in concern, unsure of what to tell him. George looked around in confusion and he froze when he finally turned his head, seeing Sapnap there, "S-Sapnap?"

"H-Hey George," Sapnap greeted thickly, swallowing after he spoke. They both frowned when George's eyes widened and he gasped, nearly shooting to sit upright. Dream gasped and steadied him, settling him to sit up against the pillows, "George?"

"I was...where is...*oh my God*," George stammered, looking around with a wild mixture of fear and confusion.

"It's okay George. We'll explain everything to you, alright?" Dream soothed, grabbing George's hand again and rubbing the back of it with his thumb. George looked at Dream, thoroughly freaked out but he nodded.

Dream immediately launched into the details of the escape with Sapnap making comments. They noticed how George seemed to calm down the longer they talked but he did raise an eyebrow silently at them when they told him how they forced the pillagers in the sweatbox.

"And now we're in a camp just outside the portal," Dream explained, watching George's face carefully, "Techno's got quite a lot of people here so we're safe here."

"I see..." George trailed off, his expression thoughtful before he seemed relieved, "And everyone is *okay*...that's great."

"Yup and we're going to get to stay in Techno's village," Dream grinned and George looked at him, his eyes widening, "It'll be our new home, Georgie! You'd like that right?"

George smiled, his eyes lighting up a little despite the fact that he still seemed overwhelmed with everything, "Y-Yeah...that'd be amazing!"

"Dude, it'll be *more* than amazing!" Sapnap smirked, "Just think of how awesome it'll be to live in a place that's actually got it's own security guard!"

"Yeah," George nodded, studying Sapnap's face, "That does sound more than amazing. And you're okay, right Sapnap?"

Something wobbled in Sapnap's expression, "Why're you just asking *me*?"

"Cause Dream seems like his usual weird self," George smiled and Dream 's eyes widened as he gasped.

"What?! Georgie, I'm not weird! What the hell?!" Dream laughed, surprised but thankful that George was already well enough to be joking around with them. Sapnap seemed equally caught off guard as he laughed once.

"True but yeah I'm fine now that *you're* okay George," Sapnap winked and George made a face at him that caused Dream to wheeze delightfully. Then George shook his head and proceeded to yelp in alarm as he looked down at himself.

"Where's my clothes?!" George demanded as he pulled up the blankets to hide his chest. Sapnap and Dream began bawling in laughter at his maiden act of trying to cover himself, "Stop laughing! Why am I still only in my boxers?!"

"I swear to God I'm gonna *pee* myself," Dream laughed out causing Sapnap to wail and sink to the ground. George chuckled in disbelief before Dream finally calmed down enough to answer him, "B-Because Ponk had to cool down your skin which was easier to do *without* clothes."

George blinked, blushing, "O-Oh.....right...makes sense now."

"Don't be embarrassed George. You look good," Dream smirked and laughed once when George blushed further, glaring at him.

He forgot how much he loved to make George blush like that.

Chapter End Notes

What is it about writers and writing misery about their favorite characters? It's because of the fluff and angst! Particularly the fluff that follows! ☹️😊

Hope you enjoyed reading! I appreciate any feedback as long as it's not straight rude!

Hope you guys are doing great! I wish for nothing but the best for all of you!

Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

George meets everyone and tries desperately to overcome his confusing and conflicting thoughts about Dream. Sapnap steps in to be a good friend.

Chapter Notes

Hi guys! It's been another long week but I'm doing well! I hope you guys had an awesome week! Thanks for all your lovely comments you guys are so incredibly amazing and supportive. I love you all!

Important note: There might be themes of slight internalized homophobia and sexuality crisis here.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George still felt a bit disoriented and overwhelmed. He could swear up and down that he had just closed his eyes for a moment back in the sweatbox but now he was in a bed inside a large tent. At first he freaked out when he remembered where he was last until Dream and Sapnap explained everything to him. Then he was overjoyed to see them again, especially since they seemed to be just as happy.

Now George just felt a bit numb to it all as if he couldn't pinpoint on a single feeling. It almost seemed too good to be true that they escaped the nether fortress with no one really hurt. And he'd been absolutely no help, of course. As usual.

It also seemed like a fantasy that they'd met up with Technoblade and would be able to live in his village now...

"George...?"

George blinked, realizing he'd been staring down at his blanket in a daze. He looked up into Dream's worried stare and smiled a little, "Sorry, what?"

"I asked if you were okay. You just got all quiet," Dream retorted as he shared a glance with Sapnap. He reflected back on his previous thoughts, feeling a pang of sadness in his chest.

"I'm okay. I was just thinking about stuff..." George answered mysteriously, but it only seemed to make them both more worried.

"George...when those bastards put you in the sweatbox...did they say anything to you?" Sapnap questioned randomly and George looked at him with wide eyes. Oh. So they were worried about that? George hadn't been thinking about that at all...

"They told me I was being punished because of you both," George told them quietly, looking away quickly when they both appeared to be getting angry, "They mainly said it's because of Dream...that he chose me to go there and not you, Sapnap. I guess they thought that'd make me sad or something."

Sapnap's mouth fell open in shock and Dream's eyes widened behind his mask, his own mouth parting, "They said *WHAT?!'*"

George and Sapnap both flinched at how loud he shouted, but Dream was grinding his teeth together in a snarl which looked incredibly frightening. George licked his lips, "It didn't bother me Dream. I knew what they were trying to do. And besides, I didn't *want* Sapnap to go back there."

Sapnap whirled around to pin George with an unreadable expression while Dream sighed, crossing his arms, "That sounds like you. I didn't though...I *didn't* choose anyone. They just told us that they were taking you there and they enjoyed our reactions."

George frowned at that, feeling anger bubble up in his chest at the thought before he willed it away. No use getting angry now. He did feel distant relief that Dream hadn't actually chosen Sapnap over him in that moment then immediately felt bad for feeling that way.

"Sorry, George," Sapnap apologized quietly and George rose an eyebrow at him in confusion, "We didn't mean to do anything that'd make them punish you for it. I'm just glad that we escaped and got you out before it was too late."

George felt that previous pang of sadness return. Dream told him more details about how everyone escaped. While he was curious about Tommy, Tubbo, and Ranboo in particular, he felt completely useless. He had been unconscious and unable to help at all. He was just dead weight that Dream had to carry the whole time.

In the end, he hadn't been able to hold out like Sapnap did in the sweatbox. Why was he so *weak*?

Not sensing his growing distress, Dream turned to Sapnap with a surprised expression like he'd forgotten something, "Sapnap, I forgot about Bad! Can you go get him?"

Sapnap's eyes lit up and he finally smiled again, "Oh yeah! He wanted to see George when he woke up! I'll be right back then."

Dream nodded as Sapnap turned and sprinted out of the tent. George really wanted to see Bad again

but he couldn't shake the sadness he felt. He didn't realize there were tears growing in his eyes until Dream turned around and promptly froze in shock, "George, what's wrong?!"

George blinked, finally feeling the tears forming in his eyes and he swallowed heavily, "Uh...it's just me thinking again. Sorry."

Dream's brow furrowed and he surprised George by sitting next to him on the cot he was laying in, "What are you thinking about, George? Why are you crying?"

"I'm not crying," George replied stubbornly as he willed the tears away, not letting them fall. Dream gave him a flat expression, clearly unamused and wanting answers. George looked away from his masked face, "I was just thinking about how weak I am..."

Dream's eyes shot up in surprise, "Weak? Why do you think that?"

"I couldn't hold out in the sweatbox for very long," George sighed, closing his eyes, "Instead I fell unconscious and couldn't even help you guys with the escape. Instead you had to carry me all the way here."

George's heart thumped in his chest quickly as he confessed his feelings of self-hatred to Dream. He went quiet for a moment but when George opened his eyes to look at him, Dream was staring at him seriously.

"What the hell are you talking about, George?" Dream retorted, actually sounding a mix angry and confused, "Even if you *were* awake when we found you, you wouldn't have been strong enough to fight back. No one would have been if they'd been in there as long as you. And I was happy to carry you back since I felt guilty that I couldn't help you right away in the nether. I don't know where you're getting this from but no one thinks that was weak of you."

George's eyes widened and he felt a strange weight lifted from his chest. Why was it that Dream *always* knew what to say to make him feel better? He blushed and looked away, suddenly feeling embarrassed by what he'd said now.

"Thanks Dream..." George said softly, unable to look him in the face as he felt his cheeks heat up a little more, "For carrying me here and for making me feel better."

Dream brightened up at that and grinned, moving to touch George's arm near his shoulder, "Anytime, Georgie! I'm just glad you're alright!"

Suddenly, George was hit with the reminder of Bad's words from before they were captured. It seemed so long ago when it was really only a few days ago. George tensed slightly. Well, Dream wasn't acting any different but what if George did something that appeared inappropriate for just friends and weirded Dream out?

Dream seemed to notice when he tensed before he rose an eyebrow and opened his mouth to say something but was halted when they heard running outside the tent. George jumped when Bad threw open the curtains with Sapnap and Skeppy behind him.

Bad's eyes quickly filled with tears of relief and he smiled widely, "George! You're really awake!"

George couldn't help but laugh when Bad launched himself at George for a hug while Sapnap rolled his eyes and muttered, "You think I'd prank you about *that*?"

"Possibly," Skeppy laughed and Sapnap gave him a look. Bad parted from hugging George and wiped the tears from his cheeks.

"You feel okay, right George?" Bad asked worriedly, looking down briefly at his exposed chest. George felt a twinge of embarrassment and resisted the urge to hide his gangly body.

"Yeah, I feel okay," George answered, amused when Bad let out a loud sigh of relief. He really was like the mom friend. George wanted to chuckle. Then George met Skeppy's gaze.

"It's good to see you again, George," Skeppy grinned and George smiled, nodding his head, "Ranboo has also been worried about you."

"Ranboo's a sweet guy," George laughed, inwardly amused by how intimidating such a sweet guy could appear. He noticed Dream tense ever so slightly out of the corner of his eye and felt confused.

Sapnap laughed all of a sudden and George rose an eyebrow at him, wondering why Dream sent him a look as if they were having a silent conversation with just their eyes. And apparently, Skeppy was in on it too. At least Bad seemed just as confused as him.

"Anyways," Bad drawled, looking away from them to look back at George, "If you're feeling up to it, do you wanna meet the others? We were all gathered in the big tent in the center of camp and the others have been curious about you."

George felt a mixture of excitement and panic at the idea. He was curious about the others he hadn't gotten to meet yet but at the same time he worried himself silly about what they would think of him. Dream seemed to sense his inner panic and placed a hand on George's.

"Don't worry. They're all excited to meet you," Dream smiled and George felt his heart thud affectionately in his chest.

"Alright....sure," George said slowly to avoid stammering. Bad brightened immediately and George

hesitated, "Um...but where are my clothes?"

"Oh right!" Sarnap laughed, snickering as he grabbed his clothes out of a bag behind him and threw them at him, "I picked these up for ya because Dream said you really liked the hoodie."

George blushed at the thoughtfulness and when he glanced at Dream, he was surprised by the blush that was barely hidden on his masked face. He was frowning at Sarnap though so he didn't notice George's stare.

He quickly looked away as he remembered Bad and Skeppy were there and he moved his legs to the side, ready to stand. Bad started a conversation with Dream and Sarnap as George silently pulled his old clothes back on. He was actually very happy that Sarnap grabbed his hoodie at least. He really liked this hoodie.

George smiled when he pulled the hoodie on and then turned to the others. Once Bad realized George was ready, he beamed and hooked their arms together to lead him outside of the tent. George's legs felt just a tad bit shaky from lying down for such a long time but it wasn't terrible. Yet it was still pretty amusing to see Dream hovering close to George, eyeing him like he was ready to help him if he faltered.

The thought warmed George's heart and at the same time, made him feel a bit confused. George liked that Dream so obviously cared for him but that was only because they were best friends; they were close because George helped Dream. Before everything happened Dream would tell George he loved him but that didn't mean he was in love with George.

Then again, what was it like to be in love? George frowned and then quickly dropped his frown when Bad looked at him while he was telling him something he wasn't particularly paying attention to. Bad readjusted his arm through George's when Skeppy insisted Bad hold his hand with his free one and that reminded George of another piece of Bad's advice; to take care and notice how he reacts to Dream versus how he reacts to others.

Bad and George's arms were linked and yet George didn't feel the almost squirming discomfort of butterflies because of it. George glanced over at Dream at his left side and his eyes widened when he caught Dream staring. Dream quickly looked away to Sarnap, who was busy talking to him. George chuckled a little under his breath.

"There it is! The big tent!" Bad exclaimed as he stopped walking for a second. George hadn't been paying attention to his surroundings since he was lost in thought again and his eyes widened at the sheer size of the tent they were facing. This tent was different in color to most of the brown tone of the others; it was dark green.

"Holy crap its actually *huge*," Dream gasped, his eyes widening behind his mask.

"That's what she said," Sarnap cackled, unable to help himself. He laughed harder when Bad shot

him a flat look while Skeppy barked out a laugh. Dream smirked and George couldn't help chuckling at his friend.

"Let's go in already!" Skeppy grinned as he tugged on Bad's hand, "Everyone's been dying to meet George!"

George blinked at that, more shocked than embarrassed for once. Everyone wanted to meet him that badly? Other than Karl and Quackity, the only ones he'd met were Skeppy and Ranboo. That means the others must have only *heard* about him and they were still that excited to meet him or was Skeppy exaggerating? He must be.

However, when Skeppy pushed through the flaps of the tent, dragging Bad thus dragging George along with him, George was shocked at the amount of people sitting around waiting. Several people were sitting crisscross on the floor of the tent while two young boys sat sharing a wooden chair. They looked to be playfully trying to push the other off. The rest were standing around talking yet they all went silent once they entered.

"Guys, George is doing okay so we brought him back to meet everyone!" Bad announced as he squeezed George's arm. Then George realized he was squeezing Bad's arm first. He eased up almost sheepishly.

George immediately picked out Ranboo when the taller jumped up from where he was sitting on the floor. He was smiling happily, his multi-colored eyes lighting up, "George! Thank goodness you're okay!"

"Thanks Ranboo..." George smiled, feeling warmth in his chest for the kind-hearted boy.

After that, everyone seemed to be trying to talk at once and introduce themselves. George stepped back, overwhelmed, and he jumped when Dream placed a hand on the back of his shoulder. Dream frowned, "Jeez guys, one at a time. You're freaking him out!"

Sapnap snickered, "Why don't we can do a roll call?"

Someone laughed loudly and George realized it was Karl, who was standing off in the right corner with Quackity and someone else. Karl met his eyes and grinned widely, "Let's take it one at a time! Obviously George already knows me and Quackity!"

"Yup!" Quackity nodded, beaming at George before he gestured to the guy standing with them, "This is Fundy!"

"I could have introduced myself," Fundy rolled his eyes and George studied his features intently, trying to memorize names to faces, "Nice to finally meet you George."

"Likewise," George nodded politely though he felt all nervous inside. There were so any of them studying and looking at him. He tried not to fidget but felt comfort with the way Bad was pressed close to him with their arms still linked and that Dream was standing by his other side.

Everyone went around introducing themselves and some were downright hilarious. George met Antfrost, Nikki, Tubbo, Tommy, and finally Wilbur. After the introductions, they made room for George and the others to join them. George chose to sit cross-legged on the ground close to Ranboo and Tubbo since there was room there and inwardly felt pleased when Dream immediately seated close to him, followed by Sapnap.

"That's a nice hoodie!" Tubbo complimented in the middle of everyone chatting together. They were sitting close enough that George could hear him over the others no problem. George smiled. He already knew just based off first impressions that he liked Tubbo. Tommy was another story. He was almost annoying but in a funny kind of way.

"Thanks Tubbo," George replied and he studied the boy's outfit, trying to come up with a compliment for the boy that wasn't awkward, "I like your overalls. They look good with your white and yellow stripped shirt."

Sapnap laughed for some weird reason but it made Tubbo beam all the same. Tommy chuckled a bit, "He's supposed to be 17 yet he looks 12."

Tubbo glared at Tommy and nearly pushed him out of the wooden chair they were sharing, making many of the others laugh. George's smile widened and he felt a weird sense of belonging as he watched everyone interact for a moment.

"Oh George," Wilbur said after a moment as he straightened where he was standing across the room. George blinked over at him, "Have you talked to Techno or Philza yet?"

"I haven't," George shook his head. He remembered when Dream told him about being questioned for routine and that the same would happen to him eventually.

"Techno will probably look for you soon then," Wilbur shrugged with a curious look to his face, "The questions are easy to answer, don't worry."

George nodded though he'd already known that because of Dream. Dream told him about the questions he was asked. George was sure he could answer them all but he still thought about the important one. What did he want to do in Techno's village when all he was good at was making little things?

"What....um does everyone know what they want to do?" George asked almost shyly, looking around at them all.

"Yup! I wanna be a baker!" Nikki thrust her hand up like she was in a school and there were murmurs of laughter in the group. It didn't bother her as she let down her hand and continued with a small smile, "I'm really good at baking and maybe if I do good enough I can open my own shop there. Philza said it could be possible after awhile for me!"

"That's awesome!" Karl beamed at her, "And if you do we'd all get discounts right?"

That made everyone laugh and Nikki rolled her eyes fondly, giggling once, "Sure, Karl."

"But in all honesty, I already talked to Philza about becoming a diplomat!" Karl continued with an easy-going expression on his face, "I like the idea of talking to a bunch of people and maybe I could use my charisma to improve relationships with other villages!"

"Wow I didn't know you were capable of something so serious," Fundy teased and Karl laughed, shaking his head.

"Actually that sounds perfect," Antfrost commented as he grinned, "Karl *is* pretty charismatic and he seems to just know how to approach anyone."

Karl positively beamed and it made George laugh softly behind his hand. He also agreed with Ant, being a diplomat seemed like a good fit for Karl. Karl grinned back at Antfrost, "Thanks, Ant! Do you know what you wanna do?"

"Definitely," Antfrost nodded, still smiling, "I've never really talked about it before but I'm actually good at woodworking. Phil and Techno both said that was useful because there is no one like that at the village yet."

"Oh cool," Wilbur said as he perked up with a brightened look on his face, "Yeah we don't have anyone like that exactly. We're always in need of stuff like furniture especially with more and more people moving in."

"Awesome," Antfrost replied easily, "I've always been a crafter so it's nice that things I make will actually go to use."

"I actually need a new box-spring for my bed back at home," Tommy grinned toothily, "Think you can hook me up when we get back? I *might* pay you..."

Antfrost blinked, obviously surprised while a lot of the others shared a laugh. George almost jumped when Dream laughed out loudly next to him but then he smiled. Dream had been quiet before then so George was kind of curious what he was thinking.

Apparently after that, everyone felt the need to announce what they had an idea of doing in Techno's village. Quackity admitted he felt he was suited to politics and Tubbo commented that they could use the help. Dream was floored that Tubbo was in politics but Tubbo explained that he just helped out because he was curious about politics but he mainly cares for animals and even owned his own bee farm next to his house.

Bad went on to excitedly mention he was going to continue being a librarian which was the same as being a scholar and he was excited about it. Skeppy was a surprise because he admitted to wanting to be a weapon-smith. It was almost cute how encouraging Bad was about it to the point where Tommy, Quackity, and Wilbur felt the need to tease them a bit.

Fundy got the conversation moving on after that to announce he was going to be a miner. He liked the idea of traveling about to explore and mine in caves. He admitted how he used to do that before and George felt like he was kind of brave for that. George remembered how dangerous it was in caves even when he had Dream and Bad with him.

Ranboo was a different story. When Tubbo asked him what he wanted to do occupation-wise, Ranboo admitted with a somber expression that he didn't know.

"You don't know?" Tommy asked with a brow raised.

"Do you have any hobbies?" Wilbur asked curiously, moving his brown bangs out his eyes, "Or anything you know you're good at?"

Ranboo looked thoughtful for a moment before his eyes dimmed, "Um, I don't really remember if I ever had any skills...and I don't really have any hobbies..."

Everyone exchanged looks varying worry, confusion, and sympathy. George frowned, empathy welling up in his chest, "What did you do before...?"

"I just traveled around a bit and avoided a lot of people that were a bit too interested in me," Ranboo shrugged but everyone could tell the subject bothered him. Ranboo shifted, seeming to be embarrassed, "Um, since I have problems with my memory, I used to write things down that I wanted to remember but I lost my old notebooks when I was captured."

Things went quiet again but Tubbo and Karl didn't let that fly. Tubbo grinned positively, "Well then we can just get you new ones! And it's not like you have to know what you want to do right away!"

Ranboo seemed relieved about that and smiled down at Tubbo as Karl continued, "Tubbo's right! Besides...aren't you actually younger than us?"

Tommy and Dream whirled around almost simultaneously which many of them found funny

including George as they both cried, "What?!"

"Yes, I'm sixteen," Ranboo admitted and even Tubbo seemed surprised.

"How the fuck are you so *tall* then!?" Fundy gasped out and Wilbur barked out a laugh at that.

"Language!" Bad cried and Skeppy rolled his eyes.

"Holy crap, you're younger than Tubbo!" Tommy said with an incredulous expression. Ranboo blinked and looked down at Tubbo who seemed so tiny.

"I turned seventeen months ago and Tommy is almost seventeen too," Tubbo commented with a big smile, "So it's definitely fine that you don't have a job right away! You can learn what you like to do!"

"Speaking of..." Quackity trailed off as he looked thoughtful, "Tubbo mentioned being an animal caretaker and owning a bee farm but you're still a minor so you *can* technically have jobs right?"

"Yeah," Tommy nodded, "You're just not required to as a minor. Like I'm learning politics!"

"What, *seriously*?" Dream retorted, raising an eyebrow behind his mask as he stared at Tommy. He wasn't sure or not if he thought it suited him. George stared at him as well.

"Yeah, pretty much my entire family is in politics one way or the other," Tommy grinned, mistaking Dream's expression to mean he was impressed. Dream glanced over, meeting Wilbur's gaze.

"It's true," Wilbur said as he shifted on his feet. He grinned, "I'm more of a strategist and Phil's kind of like a peace-keeper. Obviously Techno's the leader and alongside Eret he makes the decisions."

"Interesting..." Fundy hummed as he crossed his arms but then he looked at Dream curiously, "What about you guys? You've been quiet so far about what you wanna do."

George, Dream, and Sapnap all blinked from where they were just relaxing. George was only quiet because he didn't want to interrupt anyone that was talking but now that he thought about it, Sapnap *had* been insanely quiet.

"I bet our Sapnap's going to be a warrior," Karl piped up as he nudged Quackity, who laughed once. Sapnap rolled his eyes fondly, smiling.

"You got me. I want to be a warrior since I know I'm good enough for it," Sapnap said in a nonchalant tone but his eyes brightened, "I was actually thinking it through a little more while everyone was talking. I'd like to do what Puffy does."

"You mean security?" Antfrost blinked, "That's actually a good fit for you."

"I agree," George spoke up, smiling. He remembered how responsible Sapnap felt for everyone's safety back in the fortress, "You want to protect the village and everyone. Our hero Sapnap!"

Sapnap blushed when some of others laughed and he glared at George with no real hate. George laughed, happy to see that Sapnap *did* have something he wanted to do now that he was out. When he glanced at Dream, he noticed the smile on his face as he looked at Sapnap.

"That's great Sapnap," Dream murmured softly so that only Sapnap beside him heard and George smiled to himself. It seemed Dream shared his feelings of being happy for Sapnap.

"That's actually so perfect! Can't have too many people to protect the place," Tommy grinned out, "A lot of the warriors help with that too."

After a moment of everyone complimenting and encouraging Sapnap's choice, Wilbur turned to Dream with a curious smirk on his face, "And Dream? I kind of assumed you'd be a warrior too."

Dream smirked back, "You assumed right. I kick ass at fighting and sparring. I can't wait to try my skills out on Techno."

"Oh god, *what?*" Nikki gasped out in her hands and that made so many of them laugh.

"I'd like to see that. No offense but I still think Techno will win," Tommy laughed and Dream rolled his eyes.

"I guess we'll see eventually," Dream commented and looked at George. George blinked, realizing that a lot of the others were looking at him now and he noticed it was because he was the only one that hadn't talked about what he wanted to do.

"So George? What about you?" Bad prompted when no one spoke up. He smiled, "I know you like crafting things."

"I *have* thought about it a little," George smiled nervously and he noticed Dream's eyes light up with curiosity. It gave him more courage to continue, "I actually wanted to learn more about being a cleric and treating other people."

"Oh that's actually so good!" Tubbo gasped as he leaned forward where he sat with Tommy, "Ponk has been looking for a serious apprentice for some time. People that have tried always fall through so he's been disappointed."

"Oh maybe that's why he was so eager to know if I were a cleric," Bad commented aloud and Skeppy chuckled, pulling back closer to him where he sat in-between Skeppy's legs, his back to Skeppy's chest.

"Yeah, I know some things due to...." George trailed off, a pang in his chest. He forced himself to ignore it though, "Due to living by myself for awhile. I always had to treat myself when I got hurt or sick. And after traveling with Dream and Bad, I realized I wanted to know about treating others so I could treat my friends better."

Fundy made a suspicious snuffle that made Karl and Wilbur laugh as even Ranboo looked emotional, "That's *such* a good goal to have."

"Thanks Ranboo," George chuckled and he glanced at Dream, curious to what he thought. Dream was smiling.

"Wow, a cleric. That's actually so cool George," Dream grinned and George felt warmth bloom in his chest as he smiled back, "And you're good at making things so I think you'll do great!"

George smiled, "Thanks Dream."

"No problem. I *know* you can do it," Dream replied, still grinning. George felt his heart skip in his chest with affection. Dream really was so nice. He was too good to George.

"Ahem," Tommy cleared his throat with exaggeration which made Dream and George jump. George realized they'd just been staring at each other and he turned a little red, "Can you wait till you're alone before you start flirting?"

"I was being encouraging not flirting," Dream replied flatly, rolling his eyes at Tommy. George felt a pang in his chest and he glanced up right into the gaze of Bad. Bad smiled when their eyes met and George smiled weakly back. He knew Bad was still curious about his feelings regarding Dream.

George peeked at Dream again as he argued with Tommy. He almost felt confused. Dream didn't seem to like what Tommy said and that meant he didn't like the idea that someone thought he was flirting with George right? Then that has to be it. Dream just really cares for George but it doesn't go further than friendship. It makes sense, after all, Dream told him about his ex-lover which had been a woman. Dream likes *women*. He really was overthinking everything.

"George?" Sapnap murmured softly, his brow furrowing and George looked over at him, surprised

by the amount of concern he saw in his eyes. George quickly schooled whatever his expression looked like and smiled at Sapnap, hoping he didn't ask anything with Dream literally right next to him.

And thankfully he didn't get the chance to because the tent opened up suddenly and Techno walked through. George's eyes widened at seeing him again and the tall blonde with the white and green cap must have been Philza. He looked to be older than them but still younger than 45 for sure.

At that moment, Phil looked over at him and smiled, his eyes lighting up for some reason, "Hey, you're awake! How are you feeling?"

"O-Oh, I'm good," George answered, blushing at the sudden attention. Phil seemed pleased by that and George sensed that he really did view himself as the caretaker even to people outside his own family. That was nice.

"You guys seem to be in good spirits," Techno commented as he looked around at everyone.

"We've just been swapping personal interest stories," Wilbur grinned out, "Wanna join in?"

"No," Techno's face wrinkled up and Wilbur laughed like he already expected that answer. Phil rolled his eyes at the display, shaking his head at Wilbur's antics.

Techno then turned to glance at George, "If you don't mind, I'd like to talk with you privately. I assume Dream told you about the routine questions?"

George nodded and stood slowly, pleased when his legs didn't wobble out from under him like when he first stood earlier. He could feel someone staring at him as he walked around everyone sitting to come towards Techno and Phil, he figured it was most likely Dream.

"I'll bring him back after," Techno said but he was looking at Dream and George rose an eyebrow. Why was he telling Dream that like he was supposed to report everything to Dream about George? Everyone else seemed to notice this as well because Fundy, Wilbur, Tommy, and even Bad snickered.

"Uh, okay?" Dream rose an eyebrow himself, "You don't have to tell me though."

Techno made a face but didn't comment as if he had something he wanted to say but refrained from doing so. Instead he turned and gestured for George to follow him. George did and glanced over at Philza, who had a small notebook in his hands. Phil smiled when he caught George looking, "I'm glad you're feeling better, George. Your friends were really worried."

George felt another stab of sadness, "Yeah....thanks."

Techno led him into a smaller tent and gestured for George to sit. Once George got comfortable, Techno immediately began questioning him, "I'll make this quick. First off, can you tell me where you're from in as many details as you can remember?"

George was secretly very glad that Dream prepared him for what questions he'd be asked, "I'm from a plain's village about a day's travel away from here without horses. It wasn't too prosperous but not exactly poor either. They had enough for an iron golem...."

Techno hummed, glancing at Phil. Phil was quietly scribbling in the tiny notebook he had with him. Techno went back to studying George, "Alright. This next question is one I have to ask even though I'm aware you can just lie. Do you have a criminal past?"

"No," George answered immediately.

"Okay, good. And you are wanting to stay in my village, correct? As in permanent residency?" Techno questioned as he crossed his arms over his chest.

"Yes," George nodded, smiling when he remembered how excited everyone else was, including Dream and Sapnap. He couldn't picture not living around his friends. He definitely couldn't imagine a world where he went back to living on his own again. He wasn't sure he could handle that now.

"And what do you see yourself doing there?" Techno pressed and Philza looked up curiously at the question.

"That's actually what we were talking about before," George laughed softly but rubbed his arm in mild embarrassment, "I actually wanted to learn to become a cleric. I wanna learn more about how to treat other people. Other than that I only know how to craft some things..."

"Oh that's wonderful!" Phil jumped in, his face bright, "Ponk's been looking for someone serious!"

George laughed, "So I've been told."

Techno actually cracked a small smile but it was gone after a moment and he opened his mouth again, "Final question. Is there anything at all that we should know about you?"

"Um....nothing too important to note I think," George replied as honestly as he could, "I don't know if it's important for you to know but I was kicked out of my home village so there's no way I could go around there again."

Phil and Techno both paused, looking at him in surprise. Phil frowned, something on edge to his

tone, "Why did they kick you out...?"

George realized that probably made him look bad and he quickly backtracked to spit out the whole truth, "Uh, well, our views have been different ever since I was a child and they never really liked me living there. That's to put the story short. They caught me helping Dream, who was a stranger then and didn't like it because they thought he'd be dangerous so they kicked us out."

Philza frowned more, "That's awful. I'm sorry to hear that."

George shrugged, trying not to remember that particular feeling, "It's alright now. I'm happier than I've ever been."

Phil seemed to brighten up at that and smiled gently, "Well that's good. With this you can definitely join our village."

"It'd be a two week trial first. I'm sure you've been told," Techno butted in seriously but his expression was softer this time when he looked at George, "This is also part of the routine."

George nodded, "Thank you for even considering taking us all in."

Techno's eyes widened slightly as if no one had actually thanked him to his face yet and he shuffled like he was embarrassed. Phil snickered at him and then smiled at George, "We'll walk you back, George."

"Sure," George smiled and he stood to follow them again. They were all quiet but it was a nice quiet as they walked right back on the path to the center tent.

Once they entered again, everyone went silent and barely a few moments went by before Techno spoke, "We'll be staying here in this camp for a couple of days so that you all can fully recover and be energized enough for the long journey back home."

Home. George felt his heart flutter in his chest at the word. It still almost felt unreal that this was all happening. George looked over at Dream and caught his eye. Dream smiled and George couldn't help but smile back.

"This'll be so great!" Bad exclaimed with a bright look to his face. He looked over his shoulder at Skeppy who squeezed him tight, "I can't wait!"

"Me either! I *especially* can't wait to eat something other than plain rice!" Fundy said excitedly while Ant and Nikki nodded enthusiastically.

"Speaking of food, dinner will be done in a couple of hours and today we're cooking turkey that

Purpled managed to catch yesterday," Philza grinned and straight out laughed when many of them almost started drooling. George, himself, felt his stomach gurgle at the thought.

"Turkey's definitely okay," Quackity laughed out, "But what I wouldn't give to eat some pork!"

Nikki gasped loudly and everyone looked over at Techno and his pig-faced mask awkwardly. Quackity's eyes widened and then Tommy just *lost* it. He started laughing at the flat expression on Techno's face so much that he fell off his chair. This in turn made Tubbo start laughing uncontrollably until there were tears in his eyes. Their laughter was contagious.

"Uh, sorry," Quackity apologized while Karl looked as if he were having a fit by holding his mouth like he was holding back laughter physically. Sapnap shook his head, chuckling at them.

"Ah you're fine," Phil laughed, patting Techno's back.

"Yeah it's not as if he's wearing a pig mask or anything like that Quackity," Wilbur teased and Quackity frowned at him, "Techno's an oddball with how he likes pigs."

"W-Will, do you remember when we used to tell stories about the nether creatures when we were young and Techno used to say that the pigmen were his people?" Tommy cried out, still laughing hard. Wilbur began laughing, unable to do anything but nod his head. This made most people start to chuckle at the story.

Techno scowled, "So we're telling embarrassing childhood stories now, Tommy? Cause I have endless ones of you to tell."

Tommy shut up immediately, his eyes shooting wide and Wilbur's side started to hurt with how much he laughed, leaning on Fundy much to his displeasure. Tommy shot a glare at Wilbur, "Don't act like we have none of *you*!"

George chuckled, feeling a huge grin forming on his face at everything going down. He liked how normal he felt in a setting like this.

That evening after everyone settled down and ate, George was left feeling a bit happy that he had gotten to know everyone more. He was even happier that they genuinely seemed to want to be his friend, that it wasn't just a whim or an obligation just because they'd been trapped in the same place together.

Dream also seemed to be getting more comfortable with everyone and talking with them more, which made George happy. He remembered how Dream wasn't used to so many people being willingly helpful or nice and was happy that Dream had this chance to be a part of a community where everyone actually meshed well and worked together.

After eating, everyone slowly began leaving the big tent to go find their own to settle down for the night. George was surprised when Sapnap left with Quackity and Karl after bidding George and Dream goodnight with a strong one-armed hug that nearly choked him. Then George realized that he was meant to share a tent with Dream, which made him very nervous.

Techno told Dream where they were set up and George followed them silently, trying not to act awkwardly although his heart was hammering in his chest. It'd been so long since he slept near Dream and the last few times they'd always woke up cuddled to each other.

After being shown their tent, Techno left and Dream looked at George with some expression on his face, "You feel okay, right?"

"I do....why?" George cocked his head in confusion but Dream seemed relieved.

"I was just making sure. You've gotten quiet again and I wanted to make sure you felt okay cause if not you could always sleep in the medical tent they have set up," Dream explained as he held open the flap of the tent for George.

George went inside and blinked at how much larger it was than he was expecting. There was thick bedding on the floor but as George expected, it was a large single bed. George glanced at Dream when he entered and it almost felt awkward, "Are you sure you wanted to share a tent with me?"

Dream looked over at him in surprise, "Yeah, of course I do. Do you not want to...?"

"Oh, no, I do," George replied quickly, perhaps a bit too quickly. He blushed and continued, "I just didn't want you to think you *had* to. I figured you'd want to sleep close to Sapnap."

Dream went quiet and chuckled, "No. I don't know if he's changed since then but he used to be such a cuddle-bug in his sleep and it would be suffocating."

George bit the inside of his gum to keep himself from saying that Dream was the same. He didn't want to make Dream feel self-conscious, "Oh."

"You ready to sleep yet?" Dream asked and George's eyes widened when Dream took off his mask and placed it on the ground by the right side of the bedding. Against his will, his eyes traveled across Dream's facial features. Dream's yellowish eyes drew to him and he rose a brow, "George?"

"Huh?" George blinked stupidly and then shook his head, "O-Oh yeah, I'm tired...."

Dream stared at him but didn't comment on his weird behavior, "Okay. You can have the left side if you want. And don't be so nervous George, it's just *me*."

Dream smirked then and George swallowed heavily. He had no idea that it being Dream was part of the problem. Dream just made George nervous sometimes, "Yeah...just you. Guess it's just been awhile."

"It has," Dream nodded, something in his expression as he shifted to lay down and patted the spot next to him, "So are you gonna just stand there all night?"

George rolled his eyes, feeling a little bit relieved that Dream was still acting normally. He crawled over into his spot on the left and was surprised by how comfortable everything felt. George didn't have enough courage to face Dream so he shifted on his right side facing away from him.

"Hey George...?" Dream whispered after a few moments of peaceful silence.

"Yeah...?" George whispered back almost playfully.

"I never got to tell you sorry....my recklessness caused so much trouble for you," Dream murmured and George's eyes widened. He could practically hear the upset frown in his tone.

George turned on his side so quickly that Dream jumped. Just as he thought, Dream had been facing his back, "It's okay Dream...back in the nether, I'm sorry too. I basically called you a mindless brute before we were captured and I really regretted that the whole time."

"I regret everything I said too," Dream frowned and without his mask his face was so expressive that it made butterflies form in George's stomach, "And I should have listened to you more. You wouldn't have suffered if I did. I really hate myself for that."

"Don't," George frowned and Dream looked him in the eyes, "I didn't suffer because of *you* Dream. And we never would have found Sapnap and the others if you *had* listened to me in the first place. So...let's just move on and be thankful everything worked out!"

Dream smiled warmly at him, looking extremely grateful and relieved, "Yeah, sure Georgie. Thank you for saying that."

"Anytime," George smiled back, feeling pleased he was able to put Dream at ease. He didn't realize Dream was feeling like that but he was glad he was able to put his concerns behind him.

"Can I hug you George?" Dream asked quietly and the sudden question surprised George. Usually Dream didn't ask when he hugged George but George appreciated that he asked now. He was still not used to people being so touchy with him.

George nodded his head and felt the butterflies in his stomach intensify when Dream's whole face

lit up and he immediately shifted closer, bringing his arms around George's torso to pull him close. His hands, which George suddenly realized were much larger than his, rubbed his back in small patterns which felt really nice.

In fact, it was quite comforting. George felt like he could fall asleep right there if Dream kept rubbing his back like that. Hesitantly, George wrapped his arms around Dream's own waist. He felt his face warm up slightly when Dream shifted a little closer to him and hummed contently.

This put George's face comfortably under Dream's chin, his face resting near his collarbones. Now that he thought about it, George fit perfectly in a hug with Dream. The thought made him close his eyes and smile as Dream continued to draw patterns into his back.

He didn't realize he was drifting off until he heard a soft, "Goodnight George."

When George woke up the next morning, he was surprised to wake up alone. Dream must have gotten up before him and left. George sat up slowly, feeling a slight headache. He sighed softly.

Last night Dream was so kind to him. George was sure his discomfort must have been obvious to Dream and that was why he wanted to hug George. Dream seemed good at noticing things about others. Maybe it was a Dream-thing.

George shook his head and got up slowly, hearing various noises outside his tent that spoke to a busy camp. He stretched out his limbs and decided he would go see Ponk. He wanted to see if Ponk really did like the idea of teaching George medicine.

As George stepped outside, he was nearly blinded by the morning sun and shielded his vision. As it cleared, he got a good look at everyone walking around or working busily about the camp. The normalcy of the sight made George feel right at home as he went about walking to Ponk's tent.

On his way, George managed to see Antfrost with Bad and Skeppy, all of whom greeted him enthusiastically. George smiled, waving at them but not stopping to chat. They seemed busy doing whatever it was they were doing anyways.

Once he made it to the beige tent that belonged to Ponk, George hesitantly entered. Ponk was standing about, organizing supplies it seemed. George cleared his throat, "Um, hi..."

Ponk looked up at him and then beamed, "Oh, George! How are you feeling today? I heard you were interested in becoming a cleric! That's great! You have *no* idea how hard I've been trying to find an apprentice!"

George laughed as he fired off sentences before lifting a hand to wave him off, "I'm good, Ponk, thank you for helping me. And I'm glad to learn from you. At first I was afraid you'd think I was trying to step into your position."

"Not at all. We need more people like me in a growing village," Ponk grinned as he studied George, "So I'm ecstatic you want to learn. You seem to have the aptitude for it from what I've heard about you. Anyways, now that you're here is it alright if I give you a check up? It'd make me feel better to know you aren't dehydrated anymore."

"Sure," George shrugged, feeling warmed by his concern, "I *did* make sure to drink plenty of water with my dinner but not too much that I'd get sick."

"That's good," Ponk said as George hopped onto one of the cots. Ponk proceeded to check his temperature, the glands in his neck, and pinched at George's skin a little, "You're still not fully hydrated but it's only been one day so that's okay. Other than that everything checks out. Try not to overwork yourself today and sweat too much or you'll get a little worse again."

"Alright," George nodded, chuckling, "I don't feel up to working too much anyways."

After chatting with Ponk a bit, George left him to his own devices and left the tent. He figured he'd go looking for Dream or Sapnap now and see what they were up to. Since they weren't traveling back until after tomorrow, George wasn't sure what to do with his time.

As he walked around the camp searching faces, he stumbled across Tommy and Tubbo near the edge of the woods. He was briefly amused to see Tubbo standing with his hands on his hips, a pout of his face as he looked up at Tommy, who was sitting in a tree.

"What are you guys doing?" George called out and Tubbo turned to look at him. His pout evaporated and he smiled.

"Oh hey George! Tommy is helping me look for a beehive!" Tubbo said brightly, "I ran out of honey the other day and I was hoping to get more."

"We've been looking all *morning*, Tubbo," Tommy complained, "I wanna do something else!"

"Well I don't! I won't stop until I find a beehive!" Tubbo replied stubbornly, looking around intently.

Tommy groaned and George chuckled, "Why didn't you ask Ranboo to join you then? He's as tall as a tree anyways so he'd be able to spot one for you no problem."

Tubbo rolled his eyes, "Ranboo is still sleeping and since he worked hard helping everyone escape yesterday I wanted to let him sleep in."

George shook his head as Tommy grumbled under his breath. He decided to move on and chuckled

again as he continued to hear their argument until it faded away. A minute after that he managed to find Sarnap but he was talking with Karl beside a tent.

Sarnap looked over at him almost as if he sensed George's stare. George rose an eyebrow when Sarnap turned to Karl quickly and said something George couldn't hear from this distance before turning and running up to meet George halfway, "Uh, good morning Sarnap."

"Morning George!" Sarnap grinned toothily, "Whatcha up to? Got a minute to talk?"

George felt confused but nodded, "Yeah. I was looking for you or Dream...I'm not really sure what I should be doing."

"Ah, it's fine. We're not expected to do much right now," Sarnap said and then he gestured to the side with his hand, "Follow me."

"Where are going?" George asked but followed along anyway as Sarnap led him to a couple of tree stumps near the line of the forest, "Was it okay to leave Karl behind?"

"Sure. I mean we don't *always* have to be together. I told him I needed to talk to you," Sarnap answered and George felt nervous by his sudden serious expression as he looked at George.

"What did you want to talk to me about?" George inquired quietly, a mixture of curiosity and slight dread forming in his stomach. This kind of scenario happened before when Bad wanted to talk to him about Dream.

"I wanna talk to you about you and Dream," Sarnap replied, confirming his fears. George frowned, biting the side of his tongue, "I know back in the cells you got kind of defensive when I asked if Dream was super protective of you, which by the way I now know he is, and I was just wondering what you thought of him?"

"He's my best friend," George replied immediately and felt bad for the bite it had to it. Sarnap rose an eyebrow at him, "Sorry....you're just not the first person to ask me this. I'm...I don't want Dream to be weirded out by me."

Sarnap's eyes widened, "What do you mean? Why would he be weirded out?"

George stared at him, his heart hammering in his chest. Would it be okay to talk to Sarnap about this when he was literally best friends with Dream? "Y-You won't tell him anything, right?"

Something about his expression made Sarnap's own soften slightly, "Of course not George."

George sighed in relief and then hesitated, "Bad talked to me about this and said he thought I was attracted to Dream because I acted like I was or something like that. Ever since then I've been overthinking how I act with him. I'm really kind of awkward sometimes so I don't want to say something or do something to weird Dream out. Something that apparently friends don't do or say..."

"I doubt that'd happen," Sapnap smiled awkwardly, "So...um...are you attracted to Dream?"

"Does it really seem that way?" George asked, avoiding the question. He frowned heavily.

"Honestly?" Sapnap asked and George nodded. He needed Sapnap to be honest, "Yes, it kind of seems like that to me. You act different around him than you do around others."

"How so?" George asked, his heart plummeting.

"You always sit and stand close together like you're gravitating towards one another. You look at him a lot, I don't know if you've noticed that," Sapnap grinned at him for a moment before looking thoughtful, "And you talk about him a lot."

"I...I guess I didn't notice that," George retorted, frowning further, "Do you think Dream noticed?"

"Nah, he's too busy being in his *own* thoughts," Sapnap rolled his eyes and then looked at George, "So...you never answered my question earlier. Are you attracted to Dream?"

"Why do you want to know?" George rose an eyebrow and Sapnap just smirked again.

"Why won't you tell me? That makes me think you are," Sapnap teased and when George blushed Sapnap's eyes widened, "Wait, are you actually attracted to him? Holy shit!"

George immediately turned more red, a mixture of embarrassment and horror flooding his expression, "I-I mean, I think he l-looks really good and I've been n-noticing more things I like about him lately."

He wondered why Sapnap suddenly seemed concerned, "George, you're shaking...you know it's okay that you're attracted to him, right?"

George looked at his hands, surprised to see that he was indeed shaking. He jumped when Sapnap put a hand over one of his. His expression was twisted, "George, you don't have to answer me if you don't want to and I promise on my life I won't tell anyone but....have you ever given any thought to if you're gay, bi, or straight?"

"N...Not really. I never had to before," George replied shakily and he let out a long breath to hopefully calm down the sudden shakiness, "I've found girls to be cute before and I've also found boys to be cute but I've never thought about....*you know*...with anyone before."

Sapnap nodded, "You really had it rough, man. Want me to give you some advice?"

"Sure, please," George agreed readily, already feeling a little better from telling Sapnap these things.

"You should really pay attention to your thoughts and feelings when you are around Dream versus while you're around others. Like for example, you might think about how Dream being around you makes you feel a certain way versus how being around *me* makes you feel," Sapnap grinned as he explained, looking pleased with himself, "That'll help you sort out your feelings."

George chuckled a little, "Bad told me something similar...Dream *does* make me more nervous than anyone else."

"Nervous as in butterflies in your stomach?" Sapnap questioned and George rose an eyebrow but nodded. Sapnap smiled, "That's normal around someone you're attracted to. Can I ask you something else?"

"I guess..." George frowned and Sapnap laughed.

"I'm just a little concerned George. You seem really against the idea of being in love with Dream or something," Sapnap commented and George winced, "Do you think it's wrong for a guy to like a guy?"

"No," George answered immediately, thinking of Bad and Skeppy, "I don't think it's *wrong*. I mean, I'm not used to seeing two guys together but I don't hate it or anything like that. And being in love with Dream would bother him since he definitely likes girls. He....he told me about Sam."

Sapnap's eyes widened and he almost gasped, "Oh....I see."

"I don't know...these weird reactions I have will ruin everything with Dream," George complained, "I feel so stupid for not understanding myself like this."

"Well that's normal too," Sapnap chuckled, "Don't worry George. Dream could never abandon or hate you. I personally think you should talk it out with him. In fact he might be delighted."

"Huh?" George retorted, confused. Sapnap just continued to smile.

"Well you chew on your thoughts about what we said. If you're worried about anything just come to me or Bad," Sapnap urged, "I'm gonna go back to Karl now."

George felt even more confused as Sapnap patted his shoulder and began to walk back. He called over his shoulder, "Oh, and I think Dream's somewhere with Techno and Wilbur if you still wanna find him."

George sat there until Sapnap was out of sight and sighed loudly, placing his face in both of his hands. While he felt relieved to finally talk to someone about what he bottled up, he felt like he was left with more questions.

So people really did think George was in love with Dream. George has never been in love before and never really experienced attraction to someone before now either. Even with Sapnap's reassurance that Dream would never hate or abandon him, what if that still happened?

What if Dream becomes disgusted with George? What if he doesn't want to be his best friend anymore? What if what George was feeling wasn't love but *just* attraction? George had endless questions in his mind.

He wasn't sure how long he sat there like that but he jumped when he heard someone walking towards him, the leaves on the ground crunching under their feet.

"George?"

Of *course* it was Dream. George gulped and removed his hands from his face. Dream was standing there with his smiley-faced mask on but George still noticed how his eyes widened, leaving George wondering what his expression looked like, "Are you okay?"

"Y-Yeah...just thinking about things," George swallowed heavily, nodding his head as Dream took a seat next to him, "What are you up to?"

"I finished talking to Wilbur and Techno and wanted to come find you to see how you were feeling," Dream told him and George felt his chest warm again in affection, "What are you thinking about that's making you look like someone just told you the world was ending?"

George jolted and stared at the ground, weighing his options, "Well...uh...w-what do you think about Bad and Skeppy being together?"

George immediately wanted to bury himself alive in a hole somewhere when Dream rose an eyebrow at him, "Uh, its great that they're together again. They're a good couple. What's with the random question?"

"I don't *know*," George sighed, burying his face in his lap in frustration at himself. Dream went quiet and George nearly jumped when Dream shifted closer to him.

"What's on your mind, George? You can tell me, I promise," Dream murmured quietly and George felt tears burn his eyes. He couldn't ask Dream what it was like to be in love without basically outing his attraction to him. He felt trapped.

"It's...it's just something I'm trying to figure out about myself...on my own," George muttered and sighed unhappily.

"It's not something you can talk to me about?" Dream asked, sounding a tad hurt and George felt guilty.

"Maybe I *could* when I figure it out," George said as he lifted his head from his lap to see Dream staring at him, confused and worried.

"Is this something about living in Techno's village?" Dream asked intently.

George sighed again and lied, "Something like that. I promise I'll talk to you about it another time."

"Well...alright," Dream replied still seeming put off. He leaned back to get more comfortable and George stared at him.

He needed to sort out all his feelings and thoughts but obviously he lacked experience and he knew the person he needed to talk to. He really needed to speak to Bad. Bad knew what it was like to be in love; he even fell in love with *his* best friend. He'd be able to tell George what it was like and if it was similar to how George was feeling.

Chapter End Notes

I felt so bad as I was writing George's point of view here. I tried to put myself in the headspace of someone who had been isolated most of their childhood and it's no wonder George is having trouble figuring things out! 🙄🙄

Anyways, any feedback is appreciated! And as usual if you have any questions please comment and I will do my best to answer them!

Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

Bad talks George through his feelings. George debates his next move, his anxieties getting the better of him. Dream and George share a moment.

Chapter Notes

Hello again! I was super excited to get this chapter out! I can't wait to see what you guys think! Hope you're doing well!

Thank you for all the kudos and bookmarks! Like I'm so surprised and honored you guys! Love and appreciate you all! 😊

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After several long moments of sitting together, George decided he would go find Bad. There was a strange tenseness surrounding him and Dream after George refused to admit to Dream what was bothering him. A part of him wondered if Dream was upset with him for not telling him, but there wasn't much he could do about that since he wasn't ready to talk things out with him yet.

George sighed, standing slowly, "I'm gonna go find Bad."

Dream glanced at him and George noticed it seemed his mood soured more for whatever reason. Dream's mouth twisted like he was trying not to say something. He eventually just nodded and George walked away, feeling nervous for an entirely different reason now. Dream wasn't mad at him right?

"W-Wait, George!" He didn't get far before Dream grabbed his hand and part of his wrist to stop him from walking further away.

George flinched and turned around to face Dream again with wide eyes. Dream was standing and he looked slightly flustered, "Um, we're okay right? You're not upset because of something *I* did....right?"

He looked so worried that George didn't have the heart to be honest with him in that moment. George smiled at him, "No it's not because of you....of course we're okay!"

Dream paused before he smiled back, obviously relieved. He glanced down at where his hand was grabbing George's and slowly let go, "Alright. I just wanted to make sure..."

Something like guilt and sadness twisted in George's chest at Dream's relief. He didn't see Dream worried often but it just reminded him how much Dream cared for his friends, George included.

"Well, I better go talk to Bad now," George said slowly, staring into Dream's mask. He imagined what Dream's expression must look like now, "I'll see you later?"

Dream nodded, grinning in a way that showed off his teeth. George suppressed a shiver. He looked so good when he grinned like that, "Yeah, sure."

George spun around on his feet and forced himself to walk off without looking behind him despite feeling a gaze on his back. His heart picked up in pace but he ignored that as he thought about the last place he saw Bad. He walked the path back to his and Dream's tent.

Sure enough, Bad was still off to the side of another tent with Antfrost and Skeppy, same as before. They seemed to be just chatting. Skeppy was sitting on some small crates while Ant was laying on the ground staring at the sky. Bad was the only one standing and their eyes met when he looked over.

"George! Hi again!" Bad greeted enthusiastically and George felt himself smile. Bad did a good job of making you feel genuinely included.

"Hi guys," George greeted in return, walking over towards them, "What are you up to?"

"Just talking through some stuff," Skeppy explained as he studied George, "What about you? How are you feeling by the way?"

George's smile widened, "I'm okay. Thanks for asking. And I'm just walking around I guess..."

"I'm glad you're feeling better," Bad said sincerely.

"Why are you just walking around though?" Ant asked as he sat up slowly with a curious expression on his face, "I figured you'd be with Dream by now."

George tilted his head, a confused frown forming on his face, "I *was* just with him...why'd you say it like that...?"

Ant blinked, "Did I sound offensive? Sorry if I did. It's just that Dream's always hovering around you."

It was George's turn to blink. His face turned pink and he felt his stomach flip nervously. Bad

looked at Antfrost with an unreadable expression before turning to George, "You okay George?"

"Uh, yeah. Actually I, uh, wanted to talk to you Bad," George swallowed heavily, feeling himself blush further as if everyone knew what he wanted to talk about. However, Skeppy and Ant just raised their eyebrows in confusion.

Bad's eyes went a little wide but then he smiled, "Alright! Let's take a walk then!"

"Okay," George nodded, relieved. Bad hooked their arms together much like when he first woke up and he actually felt grateful for the contact. Skeppy and Ant just watched them walk away until they were out of sight. George realized Bad was leading them close to the edge of the forest.

"So....what's wrong George?" Bad asked carefully, looking over at George's face, "Something definitely seems to be bothering you ever since you woke up."

George stared at him but didn't really feel surprised that Bad noticed. Bad seemed to notice more than most people realized. Same with Sapnap, "It's....it's about Dream...."

"I figured it might be about him but I didn't want to assume anything," Bad smiled gently, squeezing his arm lightly, "Did something happen?"

"No," George shook his head and sighed heavily, "It's just that ever since you told me it seemed like I was attracted to Dream and had feelings for him in the nether things have been different. I get nervous around Dream because I'm scared I'm acting too affectionate in a non-friendly way. I keep overthinking and I can't take it anymore!"

Bad's eyes widened the longer George spoke, "Oh....George I-I'm sorry. I had no idea you'd take what I said so hard...I-I was only trying to help."

"O-Oh, no you did! Sort of," George stammered out when he realized Bad was getting upset with himself, "I just....I don't know what to do....so I thought talking to you might give me some clarity."

"Why?" Bad asked, looking confused. George bit his lip nervously.

"Because.....because you fell in love with *your* best friend," George replied quietly and Bad's eyes widened again but in recognition this time.

"Oh," Bad gasped and then smiled, "Oh, I see now. You think you might be in love with Dream?"

George felt his heart skip several beats in his chest, "I don't *know*...I've never been in love or attracted to someone before. I thought if I talked through it with you then you'd be able to help

me."

Bad chuckled, taking pity on him, "Okay. I'll tell you about my feelings for Skeppy and how all that worked for me."

George felt absurdly relieved as he nodded. The two decided to sit in the grass away from the edge of the forest, just in case. After they got comfortable Bad cleared his throat, "Keep in mind though that everyone feels things differently so if you're looking to compare feelings it won't be exactly the same, okay?"

"Right...." George nodded again, smiling, "I'm not *that* ignorant Bad."

Bad rolled his eyes, "Alright, wise guy. Just making sure you realize that."

"So, did you find out you were gay due to your feelings for Skeppy? George prompted almost impatiently.

Bad laughed at him, "Yeah. I've only ever had feelings for Skeppy after all. I figured out I was gay before him and didn't have nearly as much trouble with figuring it out like he did. Anyways, it was kind of hard for me to notice that I was attracted to him like that because we'd always been together."

"Really?" George questioned, raising an eyebrow. Bad nodded.

"Yeah. I had feelings like I always wanted to be together with him and eventually that turned into thinking things like how I liked when we hugged. It started off with innocent things like that for me," Bad explained and George hummed, trying not to get distracted in his own thoughts, "As we grew older our hugs lasted longer and we'd eventually find ourselves cuddling close to each other when we sat side by side."

"We didn't think much of it at first," Bad added immediately, glancing at George's face, "And then one day I overheard a villager from my home village comment on how odd we were for acting like two lovers when we were both boys."

George's eyes widened and he sucked in a breath, "Oh...."

"Yeah," Bad frowned, his eyes darkening, "I remember how shocked I felt because I never thought of it that way. That we were acting like lovers. But after that, it was all I could think about....sounds familiar right?"

George nodded quickly, his heart hammering, "So what did you do?"

Bad smiled at him, "I was confused and I avoided Skeppy the rest of that day but that didn't fly with Skeppy. He's a force to be reckoned with when he doesn't get his way sometimes."

"He came to my house and cornered me in my own room," Bad laughed, shaking his head at the memory, "He was shouting at me for ignoring him the rest of the day when we had plans together and demanded to know if he did something."

George inwardly jolted, remembering back to Dream's similar worry. Bad continued, unaware, "I eventually cracked and told him what that villager said. He seemed just as shocked, like he was equally unaware we were acting like that. I shyly told him how I didn't think the villager was wrong after thinking about it."

"Then what happened?" George asked slowly, staring at Bad.

"To put a long story short, we took a couple of days apart from each other at my insistence. I wanted to think things over. When I did, I realized that whenever I thought of my future, Skeppy was always in it. I also realized how I didn't think about girls the way I thought about Skeppy," Bad explained with a slight blush on his face, "I thought about kissing him too and how the thought didn't bother me."

George blushed himself and swallowed as he pictured what it might be like if Dream were to kiss him. He was taller than George so he'd have to lean down....George felt his whole face burn and shook his head rapidly, his heartbeat picking up in pace.

"Afterwards, I talked it through with Skeppy honestly. He admitted to thinking the same things about me," Bad smiled down at the ground, "It was a bit awkward at first but it was overall easier to be together after that."

"I see...I...I guess it would be awkward," George gulped, his hands almost shaking. Bad glanced at him sympathetically.

"I feel like I butchered that," Bad laughed a little, though he looked worried, "How about you tell me what you feel when you think about Dream? Like as honest as you can be!"

George frowned, fidgeting with the end of his hoodie sleeves nervously as he thought it over, "Dream.....makes me nervous, like I never know what I should do next when I'm around him. He also makes me feel easily embarrassed which I never thought I was before...cause he says things he feels so easily."

"Yeah he does," Bad nodded, smiling gently, "What else do you think about him?"

"I think that he's extremely considerate....more than people realize. I think he's super talented at

anything he tries to do. He can be annoying sometimes with how he likes to pick on me a little and especially with how he likes to fluster me on purpose," George frowned as he thought more about it.

"Alright and how do you *feel* about him?" Bad prompted, schooling his expression for some reason. George stared at him before looking at the ground.

"Other than making me nervous and embarrassed, I feel kind of the same as you described. I can't imagine my future without him in it. I can't imagine him not being around. I like the idea of us always being together," George blushed again as he said this, his stomach fluttering, "I realize that I do like the way he looks with the mask on but *especially* without it. I like it when he hugs me or sits close to me."

Bad's eyes widened slightly but he smiled again, "George, it sounds to me like you are definitely attracted to Dream in a romantic sense."

George's heart skipped a beat and Bad quickly added, "Which is not a bad thing you know?"

"I-I guess...." George stammered, but his heart was still beating a bit too quickly.

"As for being in love....how would you feel if Dream was with someone else romantically? Or if he told you he was in love with someone else?" Bad prompted with a serious gaze.

George felt a pang in chest that most certainly answered that question for him. He tried to picture someone else by Dream's side, talking and laughing with him, cuddling him at night. He was surprised with the amount of sudden anger, sadness, and annoyance he felt, "I would hate that actually...."

Bad laughed for some reason, "I thought so....it makes you jealous, right? That is what it means to be in love with someone George!"

George's eyes widened and he squeezed the ends of his hoodie sleeves as Bad continued, "When you're in love with someone, it's like you want that person all to yourself! You want them to be happy but more than that you want to be the one to *make* them happy! You'll do anything for that person and you always want to be together. You like it when you touch and you'll want to be close to the person you love; to kiss and embrace them. Those kind of things!"

George blinked, staring directly into Bad's eyes, feeling stunned, "I'm in love with Dream?"

Bad laughed again, but his eyes softened, "Yeah, sounds like it. You're in love with Dream."

George felt his chest warm as he thought over Bad's words. Everything he described, that's how he

felt. He wanted Dream to be happy. He liked making Dream laugh that weird wheezing laugh of his. He liked when Dream smiled, smirked, or grinned. He looked particularly good when he smirked or grinned toothily. George laughed, overwhelmed, "I'm in love with Dream!"

"Yeah!" Bad giggled, playfully pushing his arm against George's, "I'm so glad that I was able to help you figure things out!"

George still felt blind-sided by the revelation, "M-Me too...I guess I should have realized before....I guess I really am gay. I mean, I've never thought of a girl like that before and I don't think I can...."

"Hmmm it can be difficult to understand," Bad smiled sympathetically, "And don't feel bad, you were isolated for a very long time and your parents died when you were still young. It's okay that you had a hard time."

George felt his eyes tear up. He really was surrounded by good people. He leaned on Bad, trying not to snifle, "Thanks Bad....thanks for talking it out with me."

"That's what I'm here for, George," Bad replied softly, "Anytime. I wish someone had been there for me when I was confused about this stuff, but I'm ultimately glad I could help someone else."

George nodded, leaning away to sigh into his hands. He was in love with Dream. He did want to be with Dream forever because he couldn't imagine not being around him in the future. He thought Dream looked hot. He especially liked his smirk and how much taller and bigger he was than him. George wanted to make Dream happy...

Then George suddenly remembered a distant conversation back when Dream told George about Sam, his ex-lover. He couldn't remember all the details as he'd had a concussion at the time, but he still remembered the main details. How Dream really liked her and she cheated on him. George felt a familiar pang of pain in his chest, "I don't think Dream would ever love me like that though."

Bad's smile dropped at the sudden statement and he looked extremely confused for some reason, "Why do you think that?"

"He told me more about that first love he had," George answered but then hesitated, not wanting to share Dream's personal story that he'd only shared with *him*, "Well it was a girl not a boy....so Dream is definitely straight. And earlier, he didn't seem to like it when Tommy insinuated that Dream was flirting with me...."

George glanced over at Bad, suddenly feeling miserable the longer he thought about it. For some reason, Bad looked close to panicking and he also seemed to be holding something back. Did he have something to say? George rose an eyebrow.

Bad bit his lip, "Um, well you don't know for sure unless you talk to him about it, you know?"

George groaned, hiding his face, "That's what Sapnap said..."

"I know you're worried about talking to him about it," Bad trailed off hesitantly, "But you don't have anything to worry about. Dream's your best friend and it's obvious to everyone how much he cares for you. He'd never stop being your friend even if you told him."

George really wanted to believe it....but it was like his brain or heart one couldn't fully accept it. The thought of confessing to Dream made him feel so anxious he might throw up. George took a deep breath, "I don't know how to ask him something like that without it being weird..."

Bad paused, "Yeah, I get it....I guess all you can do then is wait for an opportunity to ask. Like if it comes up in conversation or the timing seems right..."

George nodded, a little calmer, "That sounds like a good option..."

"You never know, George," Bad added as he smiled, going to stand slowly, "If you ask me, I think you should just talk to him and tell him your honest feelings, holding nothing back!"

George paled, "I don't know about that..."

Bad laughed a little, "I know. It's up to you. I'm here if you ever need more advice!"

George nodded and stood as well, stretching his legs out since they felt a little stiff. He talked with Bad just a little more before Bad decided to get back to Skeppy.

"I feel like if I'm gone longer than this he'll come bother us," Bad said with a fond look in his eyes before he turned back to George, "You'll be okay by yourself?"

"Yeah, I'll probably just walk around again. I kind of want to think on my own now," George sighed out and Bad nodded, frowning slightly, "Thanks again Bad."

"Anytime George. I *mean* it," Bad replied seriously and George smiled at how much Bad cared for him. He nodded and walked away, letting Bad return to Skeppy. He was sure it was hard for them to be apart since they'd been forced apart for so long.

George crossed his arms and let out a long sigh, trying to calm himself. He wasn't sure what to do now. He felt a little relieved after talking to Bad but now that he knew what he was feeling what was he going to do about it?

It was insanely nerve-racking to think about talking to Dream about this sort of thing. Though....he

should be used to rejection. George snorted, his eyes darkening.

But what if he *wasn't* rejected?

He paused, considering his racing thoughts. Dream *did* care about him a lot. George remembered what Ant said about Dream always hovering over him. He thought back to Techno's odd consideration to Dream about things concerning George. Did people think they were together?

George was so into his thoughts and staring off into the ground that he ran into something solid hard enough that he stumbled on his feet. He looked up, an apology on his tongue, "S-Sorry!"

Wide multi-colored eyes met his and George felt relieved it was someone he knew rather than a stranger. Ranboo smiled, "Oh, George! It's fine!"

"I was daydreaming," George said sheepishly and then looked around to see that Ranboo was apparently just standing by himself, "Um, what are you up to by yourself?"

Ranboo's smile dimmed and he looked around as well, "Well, uh, I was also kind of daydreaming....about things...."

The way he said that concerned George and he frowned, "What things?"

"About Techno's village," Ranboo confessed quietly, rubbing one foot into the dirt, "About that minor law where minors have to stay with someone...."

Instant understanding dawned on George and his eyes widened, "Oh...."

"What if.....what if I bring too much bad attention to Techno's village?" Ranboo fretted, his brows drawing together like he was distressed, "I look like this....so what if bad people try to....I don't know...."

George frowned sadly, "There's nothing wrong with the way you look, Ranboo. You're unique! And no one's gonna let anything bother you again."

Ranboo's eyes grew wide and he glanced at him. George smiled and continued, "And that's not only how *I* feel. You're really interesting whether you think that or not. And Tubbo really likes you."

Ranboo blushed and it was easily seen on the white side of him. George laughed as Ranboo continued hesitantly, "T-Thank you George. I like Tubbo too but I can't help but be worried that I'll make things worse somehow. And about that minor law....I know realistically that no one would

want to take me in..."

George frowned again and before he could open his mouth to speak someone beat him to it, "No need to worry about that, mate. I'll be taking you in!"

Both boys immediately recognized that accent as belonging to Philza and when they turned they saw the tall blonde jumping towards them from where he was up in a tree of all things. George's eyes were briefly drawn to the wing-shaped cape on Phil that seemed to slow his fall.

"P-Phil....*what*?" Ranboo asked, sounding out of breath and it took George a minute to realize what Philza even said. When it finally hit George's eyes also widened like Ranboo's.

"I already told Techno about it. I thought it'd be best if I took ya in," Phil smiled gently as he looked at them, "Though Techno is also gonna responsible for ya so it's not just me."

Ranboo's eyes lit up and he beamed, "Thank you Phil!"

"No problem," Phil chuckled, "Though it won't be a full adoption or anything like that. I hope that's okay. I already have my handful with my three sons though two are full-grown now!"

Ranboo and George both laughed. Ranboo's cheerfulness didn't falter at Philza's words though, "I'm just thankful that you're willing to look after me. I was worried what would happen if no one took me in."

Philza looked sad for a moment before he smiled again, "Don't worry about it. We'd never kick out a minor! We always make it work somehow. Basically you'll be like Tubbo! You'll live on your own with me and Techno being responsible for looking out for you. We'll check in on you often."

Ranboo seemed to pause at the mention of Tubbo. Something flashed across his eyes like confusion and even George had momentary confusion. However he didn't want to assume anything. Tubbo seemed like a sweet boy but he probably has a story just like they all do. George didn't want to pry into details about the boy.

"Speaking of Tubbo, he's with Tommy near the edge of the forest," Phil added randomly, still smiling as he looked at Ranboo, "Why don't you go find them and tell them the news?"

Ranboo blinked but he smiled, excited at the notion, "Sure! I'll go find them. Thanks again Phil! And you too, George!"

Phil waved him off as Ranboo ran off quickly. George felt a bit better knowing Ranboo wasn't so upset anymore; he was just a kid after all. He glanced at Philza, who was much taller than him and found that he couldn't get a good read on his expressions.

Then George realized that Philza was sort of mysterious, like he was the type of person that had good control of themselves and only showed what they wanted to show others.

George didn't realize how hard he was staring until Phil looked directly at him and met his gaze. George flinched, snapping out of his daze. He smiled, "Um...so how's it going?"

He grimaced at how awkward he was and Phil laughed, "Oh, I'm good. Thank you. You seem to be okay too."

"Yes," George nodded, ignoring the little thoughts in his mind that told him that he was still somewhat a mess but not physically. It went silent again and George found himself overthinking if it were an awkward silence or not.

He glanced over at Phil again and stared when Phil adjusted the cape on his shoulders slightly. He caught George's eyes again and smiled softly, "It's called an elytra."

George jumped and looked at Philza in the eyes. Phil laughed, "The cape. It's called an elytra."

"Oh....never heard of it.....what's the difference?" George asked, hoping he didn't just make himself sound ignorant again. Phil was still smiling though.

"I'm one of the recorded few to have one. It's technically not *actually* an elytra because those are just in the legends; the legends about the mythical cape that exists on a big ship somewhere in the end," Phil explained slowly, "What I have is modeled after the elytra since no one knows if it actually exists or not. I made it myself."

"Wow, seriously?" George gasped, his expression gaping as he stared at Phil. The taller blonde laughed at his expression.

"Yes. I used phantom membranes among other things to make it. I made it in a shape that helps me glide around and also helps with falling," Phil grinned brightly as he explained further, "It took a lot of trial and error but it's a project I'm passionate about. It works for me but it's so hard to make because it's nearly impossible to encounter phantoms."

"I thought phantoms were just stories," George said as he shivered and Phil chuckled.

"No. It's just hard to see them and even harder to *fight* them," Phil retorted, "You have to be sleep-deprived. I stayed awake for a solid three days before I managed to see them but I made it work somehow and was able to fight them. It was extremely difficult when you're that sleep-deprived."

"Sounds impossible," George frowned, thinking on how much he liked his sleep. Phil smiled,

shrugging one shoulder.

"I was motivated enough. Not many people are and I don't know anyone else that's made a cape like me," Philza grinned, his eyes lighting up with pride, "I would make some for my kids but I'm worried they'll be reckless with it so I decided not to."

George blinked and let out a loud laugh at the image of Tommy, Wilbur, and Techno with an elytra on their backs. It didn't suit any of them the way it seemed to suit Philza, "I get it."

"Right?" Phil laughed and patted George on the back, "Anyways, I need to go check something."

"Alright. Bye Phil," George smiled and waved back when Phil gave him a tiny wave before walking off.

Well that had been a nice distraction while it lasted. George was very intrigued with Phil's talent. He couldn't believe he took a passion in the legend of an elytra and managed to make something like it for himself. That was incredible!

George looked around, once again lost as to what he should be doing. Somehow George still didn't have the courage to go find Dream. He probably should but just the thought made his legs shake nervously. Why he such a coward about the things that mattered?

He sighed, forcing his legs to walk forward. He'll probably figure something out as he walked around. It seemed to help him focus on his thoughts anyways. Briefly, he thought about finding Sapnap again and asking his opinion on what he should do but then he fought against that idea. Sapnap would probably be way too enthusiastic and try to convince him to tell Dream everything.

And it's not that George *never* wanted Dream to find out, it's just that he was afraid of what all would change if he did. George thought he handled change pretty well but apparently not when that change included Dream. He didn't know what he would do if Dream was forced to reject him and make their friendship awkward. Dream was the type that would walk on eggshells with him after rejection and the thought was just so off-putting to George.

George continued to walk closer to camp and tried not to wallow in his increasingly depressing thoughts. He maneuvered past tents and people alike, unsure of where he was even going at this point.

He froze when he heard a familiar wheezing laugh, his heart leaping into his throat at the sound. His hands began shaking and he glanced to the left, hiding partially behind a tent as he surveyed the area in front of the tent.

Dream was talking to Wilbur from where both were standing across from the other near a small fire

pit. George felt his stomach clench when he noticed Dream smiling at Wilbur and Wilbur was also smiling. He felt insanely curious of what they were talking about and leaned slightly closer.

"I think it's a good idea," Wilbur said and he laughed again, moving his hand along his curly brown bangs, "We can talk about it more over dinner, if you're interested?"

"Dinner?" Dream asked with laughter in his tone, slightly confused.

"Yeah, I could even make us a pizza. I've gotten good at it," Wilbur grinned and Dream laughed a little louder this time.

"That doesn't sound like a bad idea to be honest," Dream shrugged, shifting around on his feet, "It's been *years* since I've eaten a pizza."

"It's a date then!" Wilbur beamed and George felt his heart drop into his stomach, his hearing almost buzzing in and out from shock as he leaned back, unable to hear the rest of their conversation.

A date? Like a *romantic* date? Wait, no, surely not? George backed away, thinking back on Dream smiling at Wilbur. No, it could just a friendly thing, Dream doesn't even like boys.

Or *does* he?

George felt tears stinging in his eyes as he continued to walk backwards until he paused, wiping his eyes. He was being too dramatic. He wasn't aware that love for someone and especially jealousy could feel this bad.

Wilbur wasn't ugly in the slightest. Now that George thought about it, Wilbur actually looked really good. He was tall with a good figure and he was smart; probably smarter than *George*.

George shook his head. All he was doing was making things worse by thinking this way. In fact, he still didn't know for sure if Dream even liked boys, so what was the point in getting so worked up until he knew? George wiped his eyes, surprised by the tears that smeared on his fingers at the motion.

"George, right?" He jumped, looking in front of him in shock. He was close to another few tents and forgot when he even started walking away. The person in front of him wasn't super tall like Wilbur or Dream. He had a short mustache around his mouth, brown hair, and tan skin.

"Y-Yes?" George answered when he realized he hadn't yet. The guy in front of him beamed in a friendly manner.

"I was wondering when I'd meet ya! I'm Hbomb!" The guy introduced, "My friends and I met your friends yesterday but we didn't get to meet ya because you were hurt."

George blinked, suddenly understanding and remembering something Dream mentioned about Techno's subordinates; people that worked and lived in Techno's village, "Oh! Nice to meet you."

"Now what's a pretty boy like you doing walking around and crying?" Hbomb asked with a small smile. George's eyes widened and he couldn't help but blush. No one called him pretty before.

"Uhh, I'm not crying," George replied, stubbornly wiping the remaining tears from his eyes, "And I was just thinking, it's no big deal."

"It is if it made you cry," Hbomb retorted with a bit a worry but mostly amusement, raising an eyebrow, "But I understand. You don't know me well yet so you don't have to tell me anything."

George nodded, a bit relieved, "Um, so what are you doing...?"

"It's almost time for me to swap with Purpled for patrol," Hbomb grinned a little, "I may not look it but I'm a pretty reliable warrior, ya know."

George couldn't help the small laugh that escaped him when Hbomb dramatically posed in a body-builder pose, trying to expose muscles. Hbomb's grin widened when he laughed.

"Y'know, ya look even cuter when you laugh," Hbomb complimented easily.

"Huh?" George blurted, feeling himself turn red, his eyes widening at the compliment. George didn't think he ever met someone so forward in a blunt way like this.

"I felt bad cause you looked really sad a moment ago, ya know?" Hbomb smiled a little, "Sorry if I made you uncomfortable. I've been told I can be weirdly vulgar at odd times. I'm just joking with ya."

"Ah....o-oh," George stuttered, he could still feel his cheeks burning.

"I heard you're the one that wants to be a cleric right?" Hbomb changed the subject and George was glad. He nodded silently, trying to cool down his face with his hands. Hbomb beamed, "That's *soo* cool! We need more clerics in town! You must be so smart!"

George shrugged one shoulder, smiling sheepishly. He didn't think of himself as smart. In fact, compared to other people....George was probably dumb. George's smile fell in an instant.

Hbomb noticed and rose an eyebrow at him. He stepped closer and put a hand on his shoulder, "Did I say something again?"

"Huh? Oh no...I was just thinking again," George frowned at himself and Hbomb smiled kindly at him. George realized he was trying in his own weird way to comfort him and make him forget what was making him sad even though he didn't know what it was.

"Well maybe you shouldn't think too much if it makes you that sad," He joked, playfully winking at him. George cracked a smile.

"*George?*"

George's smile fell for a second time and his eyes widened as his head whirled to the side to see Dream walking towards them. He paused, eyeing Hbomb. George's mouth fell open like a fish's and he suddenly felt flustered, unsure what to say now that he was face to face with the man taking over his thoughts constantly. Dream's eyes fell down a bit and then George froze when Dream scowled.

"What are you *doing?*" He asked, his tone scarily low. Before George could process anything, Hbomb's hand dropped from his shoulder like it burned him and George noticed the second Hbomb broke out into a sweat.

"We were just talking," Hbomb spoke up, his voice surprisingly even for someone who looks ready to sprint out of the area. He looks about as uncomfortable as George feels.

George tensed when Dream looked at him next. George couldn't tell with the mask on his face, but he thought Dream's expression softened a tad, "George, come with me to get firewood?"

He left it a question but George wondered why it sounded like a command to him. He must be overthinking again. George swallowed heavily and nodded, going to Dream's side.

Dream smiled and he led them away. Out of curiosity, George looked over his shoulder to see Hbomb literally deflate, wiping sweat from his brow. Their eyes met and Hbomb grinned at him, eyeing Dream and dramatically wiggling his eyebrows. George almost gasped as he turned red and turned around again. Did Hbomb know...?

Dream quickly broke the silence as they walked towards the woods, "What were you guys talking about...?"

Though he sounded mostly curious, George thought he also sounded a bit tense which George was a bit confused about. Did Dream just not like Hbomb? Was he wary because he didn't know Hbomb well? Was he just being protective....?

Or, a small voice in his head resounded, or maybe he was jealous?

George immediately shook his head and realized he never answered Dream, "Uh....um, he was just introducing himself to me."

"Really?" Dream asked skeptically, "You looked kind of uncomfortable. Did he do something?"

Ah. If George's feelings weren't currently at war inside himself, he imagined he'd feel pretty happy with Dream's concern, "Ah, no...he thought I was sad which I wasn't and was trying to cheer me up."

"You were red and your smile looked all weird when I walked up though," Dream pressed, his eyes narrowing in concern, "He was touching your shoulder too. Are you *sure* George? You can tell me!"

George realized that Dream was genuinely worried that Hbomb tried something with him and he smiled over at Dream, "Hbomb didn't do anything bad, don't worry. He said I was pretty and that my laugh was cute so I got embarrassed....that's all."

Dream blinked, his eyes widening slightly, "Oh...he did?"

"Yup," George nodded, fiddling with the ends of his sleeves again, "I'm just not used to hearing that...so it wasn't that I was uncomfortable..."

"Hmmm," Dream hummed in response and when George looked up at him he saw that Dream was scowling again. George rose an eyebrow. Was he still worried?

He couldn't think on it for long because they entered the forest and Dream directed him to stay within shouting distance as they looked for sticks and branches that weren't damp to use as firewood.

The familiar task calmed George and set him at ease. As they worked it seemed to set Dream at ease too, which George was thankful. Dream was scary when he was worked up. It's no wonder Hbomb almost melted on the spot, sweating like a melting ice cube. George almost snorted.

As the minutes ticked by, George realized that he could feel a gaze on him every so often. Every time he looked up though, Dream was studying the ground intently. This continued until, eventually, George caught him looking. He smiled, amused for once, "What Dream?"

"I'm just worried Georgie," Dream pouted, slipping in the nickname he seemed to love to use on him, "Earlier you were bothered and wouldn't tell me why then I find you all uncomfortable with

Hbomb....I know you told me what happened but I'm still worried."

"I'm okay, Dream," George smiled, feeling a pang of guilt in his chest. He also felt his heart skipping a few beats.

Dream didn't seem satisfied with that. He sat down cross-legged with a huge sigh, "You're *lying* to me George. I know something's bothering you. Why won't you just tell me?"

It was easy to remember, now, that Dream was the impatient type. It seemed he was okay with letting George come to him eventually at first but quickly gave that up. George felt his heart rate picking up. He wasn't sure what to say.

"I dunno..." George trailed off, shrugging while trying to maintain an easy-going expression so Dream couldn't tell how bothered he was.

"*C'mon* George," Dream frowned, scooting closer to where George was squatting to the ground with firewood in his hands, "We're best friends. That means we can tell each other anything!"

This was almost unfair. George frowned himself, glancing over at Dream's intent gaze. He groaned and sat himself down, "I don't know....I guess I'm just thinking too much about things I don't have to worry about right away..."

The way Dream lit up was almost laughable. He smiled, pleased that George was finally opening up some. George blinked when Dream scooted even closer to him until their legs were pressed together. He almost blushed, "I get that way too, Georgie...it's normal! What are you most worried about?"

George considered what to say. He fiddled with his fingers this time, "Uh....the future I guess..."

"What about the future?" Dream inquired, looking confused. George realized that if he were going to talk about this even a little, he wanted to see Dream's expression head on.

"Before I, uh, continue, can you take off your mask? It's hard to be serious about this when I can't tell what your expression is," George half-lied and Dream blinked at him before shoving his mask up into his hair under the hood of his hoodie without a question.

George was almost shocked how fast he listened to him. Just how badly did Dream want to know?

"Alright, so what about the future worries you?" Dream prompted, nudging George a little.

"I guess I'm just worried because I don't really know my future plans much," George answered

honestly, thinking how he wanted to word his questions before he opened his mouth. He continued hesitantly, "What...what about you? What are your plans about the future?"

Dream blinked, "Well, I'm not sure either. I think it's normal to not have *everything* planned out. I know what I want though. I want to make things work in Techno's village. I want to be a better warrior and armor smith. And I want to live with you and Sapnap. Or at least really close to you guys."

George's eyes widened and he felt warmth spread through his chest at Dream's words, "R-Really? You don't see yourself settling down with a woman?"

He wasn't even sure where he got the courage to spit that out, but now he couldn't take it back. Dream looked extremely caught off guard by the sudden question and then he looked confused, "Uh, no? I don't really see myself settling down with a woman. Not anymore."

Dream glanced at him and George stared right back, surprised. There was something tense forming in the lines of Dream's shoulders, "What about *you*? Do you see yourself settling down with a woman George?"

"No," George shook his head, staring at the ground because nothing in the *world* could give him the courage to look Dream in the eye as he added, "I've come to realize that I don't see myself intimate with *any* woman. Not that there's anything wrong with them..."

His heart was pounding as he waited for Dream's reaction. Realistically he knew Dream wouldn't hate him. Dream supported Skeppy and Bad after all, but why was this so nerve-wracking to confess to someone he loved so much?

Since they were so close, George felt the moment Dream straightened, "Wha....wait *what*? What do you...."

"I mean I'm gay..." George confessed feebly, bringing his knees up so that he could hide his face in them and cross his arms, trying to become small.

Dream gasped and it made him flinch. This was it.... "George, you're gay? *Really*? Like *actually*? How do you know? *When* did you know?!"

George's eyes widened and he felt confused. Dream sounded....shocked and almost excited? George lifted his head slightly out of his arms despite his face still burning in embarrassment and when he looked at Dream, Dream was already looking at him in awe.

"I...I've always kind of known," George lied through his teeth, not wanting to explain that he had to be talked through it like a child, "But as I watched Skeppy and Bad interacting I realized that I wanted a relationship like *that*."

"Seriously?" Dream asked and he still sounded shocked. Was it really *that* surprising? George looked at him and nodded. Dream seemed to realize something because he calmed down, "That's great, George! I-I mean, it doesn't bother me if that's what your worried about! It's *great*! Wait, I already said that...."

George stared at him in surprise the entire time and felt his mouth wobble at how awkward Dream was being. This was kind of rare in Dream's case. George laughed, "Really? You think it's *great*, Dream?"

Dream actually blushed and glanced at him, "Yeah, it's great, George."

George almost wanted to tease him. Why was it great? But he didn't get the chance as Dream continued, "Then, about before, do you see yourself settling down with a *man* then?"

George's eyes widened and he frowned, an ache in his chest, "I....I dunno. I never saw myself settling down with *anyone* before..."

"George...." Dream trailed off, looking sad. He seemed to debate something, "Don't worry...I'm sure you'll find the person for you."

He looked tense as he said it but the words still gave George a sort of pain he hadn't felt before. Dream was encouraging the idea of him with another person. George swallowed around the lump building in his throat and he tried not to tear up.

He thought back on Wilbur and frowned more, "Can I ask you something Dream?"

"Anything," Dream replied immediately.

"I overheard a little bit when you were talking to Wilbur earlier before Hbomb," George confessed, hoping that didn't seem weird. Dream blinked at him, "Would you ever date him, like, for *real*?"

"What? Oh....no, I wouldn't," Dream's face scrunched up, "I mean, not that anything's wrong with Wilbur. We have a dinner planned sometime soon. He's gonna make pizza and we were talking about my plans to start coaching others in sparing among the other things I want to do."

George's eyes widened. So it wasn't a romantic date after all? George flushed red, feeling embarrassed that he had, indeed, come under the wrong conclusion thanks to overthinking.

Dream looked at him and suddenly smirked, "Were you trying to figure out if I'd date a man George?"

If possible, George turned more red and Dream seemed to notice because he wheezed into laughter, "You're so *red*!"

George hated that Dream was enjoying his embarrassment so much. He hated how *easy* it was to blush around the man. He just hated his lack of control in general. He frowned and decided to be honest, to see how Dream reacted, so he clarified, "Yes. I *was* trying to figure out if you'd date a man."

To his delight, Dream choked on his last laugh and looked at him with wide eyes. There was something tense in the air and Dream stared at him like he was searching for an answer to a question, "Uh...well....I would. A man or a woman doesn't make much difference to me. Just depends on the person..."

"So you're bi," George blurted and his eyes widened. Dream laughed once more, nodding his head.

"All you had to do is ask if you're so curious Georgie," Dream teased but this time it felt different. It felt like the play-flirting that Dream often took on was turning more serious.

"Uh...r-right," George stammered like an idiot and promptly wanted to smack his face into his knees.

Dream seemed to consider something for a while because it got a little quiet but then he spoke up, waiting until George looked at him again, "So, if you know you like guys....do you have a type George?"

George knew he couldn't have imagined his voice going lower. Surely he's not overthinking *that* much. George felt his face burning and his stomach flipping nervously.

Before George could even think of a response to that, the moment was ruined by a high-pitched scream in the distance.

Chapter End Notes

Sexual tension is pretty high there at the end....at least for Dream. He's SO excited to find out George is gay, haha! ☹☹ But of course the moment is ruined....but for what?

Anyways! How was it?! Let me know please! I appreciate any feedback on how I write! Also, stay safe!☺

Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

Dream and the others deal with stupid people. Dream also tests the waters between him and George with surprising results. Sapnap meddles a bit too much.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I was super excited to release this chapter! I meant to get it out yesterday morning but a storm blew out my power. Oh well! 😊 As usual thanks for all your support!

And get ready for lots of fluff and tension! 😊😊

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream and George both scrambled up as quickly as they could before dashing off in the direction of the scream. As they got closer, they could hear the murmuring of conversation and it sounded like it was getting heated. Dream panicked when he made out what sounded like Tubbo shouting. He automatically picked up the pace in rushing forward with George right on his heels.

They skidded to a stop in a circle of trees. There were several different men, at least 11, standing around. They were converging on Tubbo and a horrified Ranboo. In the middle of the chaos was a huge hole in the ground big enough for at least a handful of people to fit in.

Tubbo noticed them first and he looked at them in distress, "Dream! Please help! Tommy fell down in the hole and hurt his ankle!"

"What?!" George gasped out instead of him. Dream's eyes widened as he looked at the hole again.

"I-I'm okay! Don't let those bastards antagonize Tubbo and Ranboo anymore!" Tommy shouted, anger coloring his tone.

Several of the men tensed at the appearance of Dream and George, most of them staring at Dream. Each one of them had a weapon and Dream cursed himself for not having one on him. Dream narrowed his gaze on one of the men when they stepped forward.

"Whoa, look, we got *another* freak here!" The man laughed as he quirked a brow at Dream. Ranboo tensed, "Who the hell wears a weird ass mask like that?"

Dream ground his teeth together and he saw George frown in the corner of his eye. He ignored the comment and opened his mouth to warn the strangers, "I don't know who you are or what you want but-"

Another man cut him off with a grin, "We're just bandits don't you worry your freaky little head about our names."

The one from before continued in a more serious manner, "And as we told these kids...we want all the gold, emeralds, and meat you own. We won't harm you if you deliver."

"You don't know who you're messing with," Tubbo spoke up and Dream's eyes widened again at the hostile tone he carried. George and Ranboo seemed equally surprised. Distantly Dream wondered if Tommy was surprised as well, but he couldn't see him down in the hole from this angle.

He noticed how annoyed the bandits were becoming and Dream decided to speak up again before they did something they regretted, "There's more of us back there. We outnumber you and since you haven't actually hurt us yet then you should leave now before you regret it."

"Well I think you're bluffing," A dark-skinned bandit smirked, "Of *course* you'd say there are more of you!"

"You didn't know *we* were here though, did you?" George retorted flatly and the man glared at him. Dream scowled, "So why wouldn't you take his word?"

"Look, we don't want to have to hurt a bunch of kids but we need the goods, okay? Don't be stupid," The first bandit warned as he glanced at Tubbo and Ranboo, "It's not our fault you're near *our* territory or that that kid fell in our trap that was meant for an animal."

"An animal?" George questioned incredulously, looking at the size of the hole again.

"We made it hoping to trap a deer or a bear," A short bandit shrugged and he actually sounded honest, "Now will you do as the boss says? We don't want to have to hurt you."

"And I'm saying no way in hell," Dream growled out as he took a couple of steps forward, surprising the bandits, "You don't want to be fighting us on this. Trust me. Don't make us have to hurt you."

Several bandits seemed to gulp as they stared warily at Dream, which brought him some satisfaction. Tommy ground out, "Just beat 'em up green man! They obviously aren't gonna be smart about this!"

"What'd ya say boy?!" A bandit shouted down into the hole at Tommy. Ranboo and Tubbo both glared at the bandit.

"Guess we're gonna do this the hard way," The first bandit sighed, clenching his sword. George tensed and Dream's fingers twitched. He really wished he had a sword or an axe.

The first bandit turned to eye his companions, "Do what you will but don't hurt that strange black and white fellow. I reckon we could sell him for a lot, right? Ain't seen anything that looks like him before!"

It was like the wind came to a sudden standstill and Dream's chest burned with rage. Even George glared in growing rage at that, his teeth showing in a snarl that didn't suit his pretty face. Ranboo sucked in a breath, his eyes going wide and his body tensing even more like he was ready to fight. However, none of that was what surprised Dream.

It was Tubbo's head snapping over at the bandits, his eyes widening and glazing over as if he were stunned and triggered at what he just heard. Distantly, Dream swore he heard Tommy gasp loudly. Then it was as if a alternate personality flip was switched on for Tubbo.

One minute Dream and George were glaring down at the bandits, warily waiting for them to move, then the next minute they were watching in shock as Tubbo punched the first bandit in the face with a shout of rage, his face screwed up in disgust and anger. Tubbo immediately grabbed the weapon out of the first bandit's hands and began to fight like a unhinged man with nothing to lose.

"What the fuck!?" The other bandits gasped, clearly not expecting Tubbo to fight back in such a way. Dream immediately jumped in to help, panicking at Tubbo's recklessness.

Dream was able to throw one bandit over his shoulder and twist his arm. The bandit cried out in pain and dropped the gleaming iron axe he was carrying. Dream immediately picked it up and jolted when Ranboo jumped in to kick a bandit coming up behind Dream into the ground.

Everything was happening so quickly he almost couldn't register it all. Dream swung his axe, clipping that bandit in the shoulder as his mind raced. He had to get to Tubbo, the poor boy obviously wasn't being his usual self and Dream could tell due to the constant worried shouting Tommy was letting out.

Out of the corner of his eye, Dream watched Tubbo swing his sword across one bandit's chest and immediately slice into the leg of another. It was startling how much raged focus he was putting into his attacks but thankfully he wasn't going for the kill.

"WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?!"

Dream almost jumped at the loud shout, despite it being a voice he immediately recognized. Dream

shuffled back and pulled Ranboo back with him by his arm. Tubbo jolted physically and then froze, his eyes widening. Several of the bandits scrambled backwards.

They turned to see Philza running up to them with anger and alarm on his face. Techno was running calmly right by his side with Puffy and Sapnap on their heels behind them. Sapnap looked worried and Puffy's face was blank with concentration, her eyes lit up in determination as she glared at the bandits.

The bandits themselves seemed even more stunned at the turn of events, like they really weren't expecting Dream and Tubbo to have been telling the truth. Idiots...now they were standing around dumbly, like they were afraid to move an inch.

"Dad!" Tommy yelped, his voicing echoing out of the large hole. That's when Dream noticed George leaning over the hole, his arms out like he was in the middle of trying to get Tommy out during the fight. Phil's eyes widened as he looked at it and then the anger on his face increased tenfold, "What's going on?! Is Tubbo okay?!"

The boy in question flinched, looking down at the ground in such a way that his blonde bangs covered his eyes. Ranboo looked at him worriedly.

"Who are you guys? What did you do to my people?" Techno asked in his monotone voice, his eyes glinting sharply behind his pig-faced mask, "Hmm? Will one of you speak up? Or are you all dumb?"

"They wanted to rob the camp," Dream eventually said when it was clear that the bandits were either on the ground hurt, dying, or standing around dumbly out of fear, "I tried to warn them but they persisted."

"What happened to Tommy?" Philza asked as Sapnap walked around to join Dream's side; Dream noticed Sapnap trying to subtly check him over for injuries. While he spoke Phil jumped in to help George pull Tommy out of the hole, checking him over.

"I just fell in by accident and these guys showed up!" Tommy explained as he looked between Phil and Techno. Then his eyes went to Tubbo, "When Dream said we wouldn't give them anything they....they said they were gonna sell Ranboo off...."

Techno and Phil's eyes widened as they glanced at Ranboo, who couldn't meet their eyes. Puffy gasped, "What the heck?! You guys are horrible; he's just a *kid*!"

"How could you do something like that?" Sapnap spat out, his eyes narrowing in a glare that Dream was almost surprised to see if he didn't understand the reason. Taking someone's freedom away was obviously something Sapnap would never allow again. Dream felt the same.

"I-I'm sorry....w-we didn't know," The original bandit, the boss, stammered out, holding his bloodied shoulder, "I....we...."

"You fucked up messing with my people," Techno growled as he walked forward. He appeared calm at first but the shaking in his hands portrayed just how pissed he was.

"We weren't hurt," Ranboo spoke up and all eyes went to him. He looked down again, almost shyly. He seemed hesitant. Dream rose an eyebrow at him, "They only fought when...when they were attacked and now they know we *aren't* playing around...why not just let them go?"

"Let them go?" Philza parroted in an incredulous tone.

"That's dangerous," Dream frowned, disliking the idea and Ranboo gulped, looking over at the bandits.

"They won't try anything now that they know how easily they'll be killed, right?" Ranboo retorted, eyeing the boss bandit who nodded so quickly Dream was surprised he didn't hear a crack in the man's neck.

Techno was staring at Ranboo like he was trying to understand a secret message. He sighed deeply and then stood at full height slowly, addressing the bandits, "Fine. You're extremely lucky, ironically thanks to the boy you were going to sell. Never let me see your faces again or I *will* kill you and I'll *enjoy* it, understand?"

"Y-Yes!!" The boss bandit nodded, tears of fear in his eyes.

"You lot seriously better think twice before trying anything with us again," Philza warned, his eyes narrowing, "You're lucky my son wasn't hurt by you or nothing would hold me back right now."

Dream kept the bandits' axe in his hands, not bothering to return it. He and Techno stood close to the bandits, making sure they were leaving. They gathered up their injured comrades and trotted off carefully eyeing the group like they were scared Techno would change his mind.

Once they were out of sight Techno whirled around to Tommy, "What the hell happened? We let you out of sight for an hour and you're falling in a hunter's trap?!"

"It's not my fault!" Tommy whined, glaring at Techno, "It was all covered up and I was running from Tubbo...."

All eyes went to Tubbo, who was still just standing there. Dream watched George shuffle a bit closer to him, looking worried, "Tubbo? You're not hurt are you?"

Tubbo shook his head and looked off to the side. Techno and Phil exchanged a surprised look when the boy dropped the sword and ran off towards the direction of camp without a word, obviously distraught.

"Tubbo!" Tommy shouted but then he gasped in pain as he tried to rush after Tubbo and hurt his ankle trying to step on that foot. Philza bristled immediately.

"I thought you weren't hurt?!" He demanded, squatting down to examine his ankle.

"I just twisted my ankle a little...but Tubbo we need to go after him!" Tommy scowled, looking annoyed and worried wrapped in one.

"I'll go find him!" Ranboo promised, something steely in his gaze. No one was even able to comment before the tall boy ran off.

Techno sighed and face-palmed, "Puffy, we'll have to increase security patrolling just in case those bandits decide to return after all."

"Yes sir," Puffy nodded, frowning worriedly, "How about I take Tommy to see Ponk real quick?"

"But I need to get to *Tubbo*!" Tommy groaned and Phil clamped a hand on his shoulder, shaking his head seriously.

"No Tommy. Not until you get that ankle wrapped up. Then you can find him..." Phil paused, biting his lip, "He seemed shaken up...what happened to Tubbo?"

Tommy went silent, glaring at the ground, "He had a good reason for being so angry."

"We were *all* angry at what they said about Ranboo," George scowled and Dream blinked over at him, "I just didn't expect Tubbo to take it so bad..."

Techno rose an eyebrow but Tommy just sighed defeatedly, "Like I said...he had a good reason...."

"Well, alright...just let Puffy take you to Ponk, okay?" Phil proposed and Tommy just nodded quietly. This seemed to make Techno and Phil more worried but they remained silent as they helped Tommy stand and be supported by Puffy.

Puffy led him away silently and Dream turned to Sapnap now that the craziness was dying down, "Weren't you with Karl?"

"I was for a bit but then I was heading back to my tent when I thought I heard something. I ran into Puffy then we both ran into Phil and Techno. We told them what we heard and walked out here together," Sapnap explained slowly, his eyes serious.

"Then we heard the fighting," Techno added as he looked over at Dream, "How did you and George get here?"

Dream glanced at George, surprised to see a light blush gracing his pale face. Dream smiled a little, "We were getting firewood when we heard Tommy scream."

"Well thank you for protecting the kids," Phil smiled and Dream nodded, looking towards the way the bandits fled, "Don't worry, I highly doubt they'll try anything after *that* defeat."

"Yeah..." Dream trailed off and noticed Sapnap glaring where the bandits fled as well, "They have to be the dumbest people I've met."

"Same," George frowned, crossing his arms. He glanced at the hole again, "Do you think there could be anymore of these hunter traps?"

"Possibly," Techno sighed, rubbing the bridge of his nose, "I'll have to tell the others to be on the lookout if they're ever in the woods."

"I feel like this trap is over the top though," Sapnap commented and Phil nodded in agreement.

"It is actually, but no use worrying about it now. Just to be safe we should plan to leave for home tomorrow morning," Phil explained and Techno glanced at him.

"That's probably for the best," He agreed and then looked over at George. Dream's eyes traveled over to George as well, "No one was really injured that badly. You'll be good for travel tomorrow, right?"

"Yes," George answered seriously. He glanced at the ground, "The further we get away from here the better."

Dream frowned at him. Techno and Phil chatted with them for another minute before deciding to go back to tell the others what happened and to check in on the kids again. Once they were out of sight, Sapnap turned to them again.

"You guys are good, right?" He questioned with an eyebrow raised. Dream simply nodded and peered down at George again. George nodded as well, "So, you guys were already in the woods when this happened?"

"Yeah, why?" Dream retorted, staring at Sapnap. He had a weird look on his face, like he was trying really hard not to laugh or smile too much.

Then Sapnap grinned, "By yourselves? What were you guys doing?"

His suggestive tone made Dream blush a little but when he glanced at George again, he witnessed George's eyes widening and his face exploding with color so suddenly that Sapnap burst out laughing.

"Oh wow, you're so red George," Sapnap laughed out, holding his midsection, "It must have been something good!"

"Shut *up* Sapnap," Dream groaned, shaking his head at his friend while George looked ready to have a stroke, "You're so dumb!"

"Right...." Sapnap trailed off, still grinning viciously, "Well I'll leave you guys to it then! Wouldn't want to interrupt whatever you were doing before any longer than necessary right?"

"You're actually *so* stupid," Dream deadpanned, his heart skipping a beat as he peeked at George again. Sapnap was making George uncomfortable and if he keeps up then George won't want to be around him. He changed the subject, "What are you about to do? Go make out with Karl?"

George gasped so strongly he almost choked and Dream chuckled, unable to help himself. Sapnap's eyes widened and he turned a little red, "What the hell Dream? Where did that come from?"

"I see how you look at him," Dream smirked, "If you wanna play this game I can play as well..."

Sapnap narrowed his eyes at him, "Fine, fine, I'll lay off!"

"You like Karl?" George asked, his face finally returning to normal. He looked confused and surprised, "Really?"

"Whelp! Better go do that thing I need to do!" Sapnap clapped his hands loudly and Dream wheezed at his desperate subject change, "See you guys later! You better hang out with me tonight!"

"Wait!" George gasped out but Sapnap rushed off and George turned to Dream in confusion, "Does he actually like Karl?"

"I don't know for sure," Dream shrugged, smirking, "It got him to stop saying that stuff though."

George blinked at him and then nodded as he looked away. Dream felt the awkwardness returning and desperately thought of what to say to make George feel more comfortable. Damn Sapnap....

Then George spoke up while he was still thinking, "Hey...are you really okay? Like with what those bandits were saying about you and your mask...?"

Dream immediately felt warmth envelope him at George's concern for him. He was really glad he had the mask back on because he was sure his love for George was just glowing on his face at the moment, "Yeah, I'm okay. I'm used to people being freaked out by it."

George made a face, "It's odd when you aren't used to it but calling you a freak was just wrong."

"I'm used to that too," Dream shrugged and smiled when George frowned more, "To be honest, I like intimidating people with it. Well, the right people anyways."

"Really?" George blinked, finally looking at him again. He seemed surprised to hear that, "I don't really understand why you'd want to intimidate someone..."

Dream smirked and leaned closer to where George was standing. He purposefully used a flirty voice to test the waters and asked, "Do I intimidate *you* George?"

George's eyes widened and he blushed a little as he leaned back as if on instinct. Then he frowned, looking embarrassed, "Actually....yes, you do intimidate me Dream...just a little."

Dream leaned back as well, his own eyes widening the mask. He didn't exactly expect George to say yes. He was expecting him to remain stubborn and deny it all the way. The slight blush and embarrassed look on his face as he looked at Dream made him hopeful that he'd been right before; that he had a chance with George.

George admitting he was gay was the best thing Dream had heard in such a long time. George liking guys meant that Dream had a chance and Dream was sure as hell gonna take that chance as long as George didn't look outright disgusted with him.

George must have misinterpreted why Dream leaned back because he hurried to say, "I don't mean it in...in a bad way! You just make me n-nervous sometimes...."

Dream felt delighted at George's reaction. He made George nervous? The way he said it didn't sound like the the type of nervous like George thought Dream would hurt him, it sounded like a different type of nervous.

"Then what can I do to make you not so nervous?" Dream murmured lowly, leaning closer to

George again. He felt another wave of delight hit him when George gulped, looking away from Dream's face, his blush intensifying. Dream heart began to race. George didn't mind how close he was. George was just nervous. He was *blushing*!

"T-That is....uh...you...." George stammered, looking more embarrassed the longer the moment passed. Dream, while pleased that George was so flustered, didn't want to actually scare George away.

Dream leaned back and laughed slightly, "Never mind, sorry. So, what do you want to do now?"

George sighed in relief at the subject change which was really cute and then looked off into the woods, "Um, what about the firewood?"

"Oh...I forgot...we can worry about it another time," Dream shrugged one shoulder. He didn't want to admit to George that it'd been an excuse to get him to talk to Dream. That it wasn't even necessary.

"Well, alright," George replied and then a look crossed his eyes and he bit his lip, "Actually I have an idea."

"Really? What's that?" Dream inquired eagerly. George started to play with the ends of his hoodie sleeves, a habit Dream noticed George do whenever he was nervous about something.

"The whole thing with the bandits got me thinking," George started and paused, glancing at Dream hesitantly, "Can you teach me more about tracking someone? We started to that one time but never got a chance to really work through it again."

Dream blinked, taken back. That wasn't what he was expecting at all. Then Dream lit up, grinning, "Sure! Since you are just getting better I won't actually make you run from me this time."

"Thank God," George retorted, rolling his eyes. Dream chuckled, "Can you tell me how you knew I was in the tree last time?"

"That's easy. When people walk or run around especially it leaves marks in the ground, right?" Dream begun and looked at George, who nodded at his question, "I didn't see a trail last time meaning you didn't continue running so I knew that meant you had to be hiding in a tree."

George's eyes widened in awe and Dream felt butterflies forming in his stomach at the admiration in his eyes. He eagerly began explaining more things about tracking a person to George; about paying close attention to the trail on the ground, the size of footprints, the crushing of leaves, the disturbed dust, dirt, or cobwebs that could tell where a person went.

By the time he was finished, they'd moved closer to camp and George was smiling a lot more. Dream was pleased how eager George was to actually learn all this. It was also just so amusing to watch George's expression change so much. Honestly he would watch George all day long if he could.

"I never thought to pay attention to disturbed dust or broken cobwebs," George commented with an impressed face, "You're really good at this sort of thing."

Dream glowed under the compliment and George laughed. Then literally a second after that his brown eyes lit up, "Oh, wait! There was something else I was curious about!"

"You sure are curious about a lot," Dream replied flirtatiously and he wheezed out a small laugh when George rolled his eyes and pushed at his arm playfully.

"Shut up. I was wondering about that move you did with the axe earlier," George said with a smile, "It was kinda cool."

Dream couldn't remember anything significant he did with the axe that George apparently saw. He felt like he was on cloud nine with all the attention and compliments he was getting from the smaller male and couldn't concentrate, "What do you mean?"

"Like that one bandit you clipped on the shoulder with the axe," George prompted, "You had just hit that other bandit and flipped the axe in your hand one-handed, it was pretty cool."

Now that Dream was thinking about it, he might have done something like that but he was just moving on instinct. He smirked, how intensely was George watching him fight to have noticed that? "I don't know, I just did it. I didn't think you were watching me that much, Georgie."

George blushed as he pouted and Dream couldn't help but drop his gaze to George's lips. He wasn't sure if George caught on to that. Dream felt an intense want to kiss the pout right off his lips. If only....

"Shut up Dream," George said without any venom, "It was just something I happened to see...I thought maybe you could show me how you did it."

An idea hit Dream, making him excited. He nodded quickly, perhaps a bit too quickly, and pulled out the axe he'd stolen, "Here, I'll show you by guiding your hands."

George blinked at him but didn't protest it when Dream handed him the axe and crowded close behind him. Dream's heart was hammering away in his chest as he slowly wound his arms around George to place his hands on George's. He tried not to become distracted by how soft George's flawless skin was.

"So it's mainly all about practice but I did something like this..." Dream explained and he moved George's hands with his own, mimicking his earlier movements.

George was oddly quiet as Dream instructed him how he attacked the bandit earlier and after he was done he glanced down at George. His face was red again and he was tense. Dream immediately felt that maybe he'd come on too eager or strong.

Dream reluctantly stepped back and retracted his hands. He looked up at the darkening sky, "We should go back to camp. It's gonna get really dark within the next hour."

"Yeah..." George agreed, playing with the ends of his sleeves again. Dream inwardly worried that he made George really uncomfortable. He anxiously led them away, not sure what to say and trying to come up with something to talk about to fill the silence enveloping them.

He was surprised, however, when George touched his hand hesitantly before grabbing to hold it properly. Dream's face warmed immediately and his heart stopped when George looked up at him slightly with big brown eyes, "Is this okay? I just.....don't want one of us to fall in another hole!"

It was cute how it sounded like he came up with that as an excuse but Dream sure as hell didn't mind as long as George didn't stop holding his hand. Dream squeezed George's hand and smiled warmly, "Yeah, I don't mind at all."

George blinked but then smiled back, looking away almost like he was shy. George was too cute. Didn't he realize how non-friendly this was? What if he did know and this was his way of showing his romantic interest for Dream?

Dream halted his thoughts. He didn't need to get ahead of himself and assume anything but man did he want to know. It was almost killing him at this point ever since George admitted he was gay. Did George have feelings for him? Is that why he's been acting a little off since the nether?

George tugged on his hand and Dream stopped, turning to look at him. That's when he realized they were already back towards camp and close to passing their tent. George looked at him in confusion, "Here's our tent, Dream."

"Oh, yeah," Dream replied stupidly, unable to believe he'd been lost in thought for that long. He led George inside the tent and resisted the urge to whine childishly when George let go of his hand, which felt cold now that George wasn't holding it.

George walked over to his bag so Dream decided to do the same if only to have something to distract himself with. He rummaged through his bag and paused in surprise when he came across something familiar.

The surprise he had been making for George was buried among all his things. He'd forgotten all about it after everything that happened. He could still make it...Dream almost gasped when another idea hit him.

"Dream?" George questioned, looking over at him in concern, "You look weird...what is it?"

"Oh, uh, nothing. You can go ahead and find Sarnap without me. I need to go find Antfrost real quick," Dream answered with a small smile. George just rose an eyebrow but shrugged.

"Well, alright," He replied, yawning once as he gave Dream one last glance before exiting the tent. Dream grabbed his bag and shoved it on his shoulder before exiting the tent as well.

It took Dream a fat minute to find Antfrost, but when he finally did it was at the other male's tent. He'd noticed the man going into the tent and followed cautiously.

As soon as he was in front of his tent he called out softly, "Ant? It's Dream can I come in?"

Antfrost opened his tent with a look of surprise, "Oh, hey Dream! What are you doing?"

"Well I just wanted to ask for your help on a little project of mine," Dream smiled, still feeling hesitant. He pulled his bag out while Antfrost looked a little confused. He grabbed for George's surprise and showed it to Antfrost, "It's not finished yet but do you think you could help me make this for George?"

Antfrost's eyes lit up in understanding. Dream already had the right shape of it going so it was easy to see what it was meant to be, "Oh! You're making this for George?"

"Yeah," Dream grinned as he turned the object over in his hands, "Lately I haven't worked on it for obvious reasons. You wanted to be a woodworker right? I figured you'd have better skills at me for this..."

"Maybe," Ant teased as he examined the object, "Honestly what you've done doesn't look bad. What exactly do you want me to help with?"

"I think I can carve out the shape if you can polish it with wax after I'm done?" Dream proposed and Ant smiled.

"Sounds good to me. Is that all you want to do with it?"

"Pretty much. Everything else will be easy for me to do," Dream explained and Antfrost nodded, still smiling, "Thanks Ant."

"No problem!" Ant replied cheerfully, "I was actually just putting something away and was about to join the others. They're all gathered if you want to come with me?"

Dream blinked, "Everyone's gathered in the tent again?"

"Not the tent," Antfrost shook his head and exited his tent. Dream followed as Ant continued, "Some of the others were making a big campfire for us to hang around tonight. It's supposed to get pretty chilly so I think that's why."

"Oh, I see," Dream retorted, looking around as he followed Antfrost. It was even darker now, the sun almost completely set. A comfortable silence ensued as he let Antfrost lead him to the others.

Eventually they came upon the site of the big campfire. Just like Ant said, Dream could make out the figure of most of the others. He was briefly both concerned and intrigued that none of the kids were around. Ranboo and Tommy must still be with Tubbo. He frowned.

His frown turned into a scowl when his eyes scanned everybody until he finally found George and Sapnap; only Quackity was hanging all over George in a half hug, laughing about something. Sapnap was also laughing and George didn't look uncomfortable. He was smiling.

Jealousy burned Dream's heart and he was gliding over there without registering anyone else. Sapnap noticed him first and his smile dropped, his eyes widening. He said something and Dream wasn't close enough yet to hear.

Quackity turned and he parted from George quickly, shuffling away as Dream came up to them. George finally looked over and his eyes widened as well, "Dream? You okay?"

Dream didn't stop until he was standing between George and Quackity, "Yeah, why?"

"Why he says," Wilbur snorted and Dream glared over at him, "You looked like someone just kicked you in the ribs."

"True story," Sapnap laughed and almost didn't stop laughing. Dream rolled his eyes.

"I'm okay," He replied easily and he got a few skeptical looks. It was kind of annoying.

"If you say so," Karl grinned cheerfully, "Almost everyone's here now!"

"We're just waiting on Ranboo, Tommy, and Tubbo," Bad smiled and Dream noticed how both Techno and Phil tensed, sharing a glance. Wilbur seemed to notice it as well because he rose an

eyebrow but didn't say anything.

"Am I the only one that thinks that maybe having such a big campfire isn't a good idea?" Fundy spoke up, looking hesitant as he glanced all around, "After what happened with those bandits today?"

Ah, so Techno did already tell everyone. Some of the others peered over at Phil and Techno anxiously. Techno hummed, "It doesn't matter. If they come back they're dead. I almost hope they do so I'll have someone to finally fight."

"Whoa..." Quackity laughed nervously and when Dream glanced at him instinctively Quackity immediately averted his gaze. Was he really that intimidating?

"No need to worry. As we said before, we'll be leaving first thing in the morning to be safe," Phil smiled in a reassuring way.

"Can't wait to get away from here," Skeppy sighed out, pulling Bad so he was tucked against his side snuggly. Dream felt momentary jealousy, wishing he could do the same with George.

Dream peeked down at George but George wasn't really paying attention. He looked lost in thought. Dream resisted the urge to grab George's hand and squeeze it for attention.

"I still can't believe a group of random ass bandits thought it was safe to pick a fight with Dream and Ranboo of all people," Quackity spoke up incredulously.

"Language," Bad scolded, glaring at Quackity, who rolled his eyes.

"I can't believe it either," Nikki frowned, staring at the ground, "I'm just glad no one was really hurt."

Everyone continued chatting amongst themselves and Dream mindlessly watched until he glanced at Sapnap. His eyes widened to see Sapnap's eyes glazed over in thought, a dark look to them that was frankly worrying. What in the world was he thinking about? Dream felt he had an inkling.

"Sap?" Dream muttered, nudging him. He thought he'd been quiet enough but apparently some of the others heard him and went quiet. Sapnap blinked out of his daze.

"What's wrong Sapnap?" Karl asked worriedly, shifting closer to him. Sapnap frowned, crossing his arms.

"Those bandits just got me thinking about the pillagers," Sapnap confessed and Dream scowled,

feeling anger bubble up at the thought of them, "There's still that group of pillagers that reside topside somewhere."

"Wait what?!" Phil gasped, his eyes going wide as Techno froze, turning to stare Sarnap dead in the eyes, "There's *more* of them?!"

"We don't know where exactly but yes," Fundy frowned, sending Sarnap a worried look.

"What if they try something?" Sarnap asked and Dream noticed the shaking in his hands that Sarnap was hiding.

"We have enough manpower to deal with them," Techno near-snarled out, startling almost everyone. Even Dream was a bit surprised at Techno's sudden hostility. Techno was always so put together.

"I guess what I'm worried about is the fact that while *we're* living it up in your village, those pillagers will probably be pillaging other villages to replace the prisoners they lost," Sarnap explained, the dark look returning in his eyes.

Everyone went quiet. Dream's eyes widened and he almost gasped out loud. That wasn't something that crossed his mind. Now that he and the others escaped, the pillagers *would* need more prisoners if they still wanted ender pearls. That meant they'd be attacking more villages.

"We won't let them," Phil scowled, glaring off at nothing in particular, "We can search for information on them, particularly where they are. We definitely won't be standing by."

"Yeah!" Quackity grinned, "We won't let them do as they please! And now there's even more of us to fight back!"

"We'll look into it when we get back and everyone is settled in," Techno said, obviously calmer than before, "Don't worry Sarnap. I'm glad you told us."

Sarnap seemed really relieved, "Okay....I guess I just needed to get that off my chest."

"I understand," Bad smiled reassuringly as Nikki nodded a lot. As everyone started murmuring amongst themselves, Dream almost jumped when George moved suddenly. He passed Dream to stand in between Sarnap and Dream.

"Sarnap....you okay? For *real* okay?" George asked quietly, so that no one else heard. Sarnap looked at him in shock before he grinned.

"I am now...I didn't want to ruin everyone's good time before," Sapnap shrugged, his grin dimming, "So I kept most of my worries to myself. Everyone was so happy to be out that I didn't want to drag us down again."

Dream frowned, feeling a pang in his chest at not realizing something was bothering his best friend. He sure was good at hiding it. George frowned as well and nudged Sapnap's arm with his own, "Next time at least tell *us*, okay?"

Sapnap chuckled, nudging George right back and looking Dream in the eyes, "Okay, okay, sorry. Didn't know I'd get scolded by you Gogy."

Dream burst out laughing at the odd name while George and Sapnap both jumped at the sudden loudness of it. Karl turned to look at them from where he was at Sapnap's other side, "What the heck is so funny over there?"

"Nothing," George groaned, face palming. Sapnap chuckled.

"Ah...." Nikki gasped and everyone turned to her. She was staring away from the group and when Dream looked over, his eyes widened to see Tubbo walking towards the group with Tommy and Ranboo behind him on either side. While Tubbo was smiling cheerfully, Tommy and Ranboo both looked kind of upset.

"Hey guys," Phil greeted smoothly though he was eying Tommy with something in his expression. If Tommy knew what it was, he quickly looked away from him.

"How are you Tubbo?" Fundy frowned as the three teens came closer and stopped to stand with the group close to Wilbur, "We heard what happened earlier."

Tubbo just shrugged, not losing his smile, "We're okay. So what have you guys been talking about?"

Something like understanding flashed through Techno's eyes and he immediately changed the subject as it seemed Tubbo didn't want to speak about it much, "We weren't really talking about anything noteworthy."

Dream shot him a look that wasn't noticed but he decided not to do anything. Apparently Techno didn't want to tell them about the pillagers yet. Dream wasn't in the place to question that right now.

Wilbur pulled Tubbo into a random conversation, something knowing in his eyes as he peeked at Tommy and Ranboo but no one commented on the two boys' expressions or the fact that Tommy had yet to say anything or be loud at all.

As everyone begins to relax into their own conversations again, Dream glanced at George and noticed George already looking at him. He felt a bit startled but he ultimately chuckled when George blushed heavily at being caught staring. This made a thrill go through Dream. George was staring at him. What was he thinking about?

Then he noticed Sapnap staring off in one direction and when he followed it, he noticed Sapnap was staring at a certain someone as they talked to Antfrost and Quackity. He grinned, "Soooo Sapnap..."

Sapnap jumped and Dream wheezed a little. George just rose an eyebrow at Dream as he continued, "You're staring at Karl....do you really have feelings for him then?"

George's eyes widened as Sapnap groaned, shooting Dream a glare, "C'mon Dream....lay off."

"I'm just curious....as your friend," Dream grinned and Sapnap sighed, rubbing his arm.

"I kind of have a crush on Karl. Always have," Sapnap admitted as he looked embarrassed, "But it's.....he's like how George is for you. He's my *rock*. Back in the prison he got me through a lot and I really admire who he is. It's like I'd do anything for him and he'd do anything for me."

George and Dream both blinked and shared a look of surprise. Then George smiled, "Wow, Sapnap....I didn't know you were a romantic."

Sapnap rolled his eyes, "Shut up Gogy....you can't say anything."

Dream rose an eyebrow when George spluttered, going red. He turned to Sapnap, "So then....are you going to confess your feelings for him?"

"Maybe one day," Sapnap shrugged easily, "I'm not in a hurry because I like the way things are right now."

"Well I'll be cheering for you when the time comes," Dream grinned and Sapnap looked at him in surprise before grinning right back.

"I'll be cheering for you guys too," Sapnap replied and his grin turned mischievous. Dream's eyes widened. He recognized that look as one where Sapnap was about to pull something, "So when are you and George finally getting together?"

He said this loud enough that everyone in the group heard it; all their conversations halting at once as collective shock roamed around. George gasped, his eyes shooting wide and his face so red Dream worried he might actually pass out.

Wilbur spit out the water he was mid-drinking, right on a unamused Techno and Fundy. Karl and Quackity died laughing. Tommy actually laughed and teased, "George literally looks like an overgrown tomato right now!"

Tubbo and Nikki giggled while Bad's eyes widened as he looked from Sapnap, Dream, to George in surprise and concern while Skeppy laughed deeply at his side.

Dream glared at Sapnap, anger and embarrassment bubbling in his chest, "Was that really necessary Sapnap? You didn't see me do that about you and-"

"Ah!" Sapnap gasped, interrupting him in a panic that satisfied Dream, "Chill bro, I'm just saying what everyone was thinking."

"True," Fundy teased as he chuckled and Dream sent him a glare.

"Wait..." Techno's shocked baritone voice filled the air and everyone looked at him. He rose an eyebrow, clearly stunned, "You *aren't* already together?"

Dream's eyes shot wide, "H-Huh?!"

"Techno my dude," Quackity laughed, wiping tears from his eyes, "Oh my god...."

Phil and Wilbur began laughing so hard they were tearing up as well and Dream felt himself flush as he glanced over at George. His eyes widened to see George's hands shaking and his gaze pinned on the ground like nothing in the world could get him to look up. He was clearly bothered.

Sapnap looked at George too and his grin fell immediately at George's obvious embarrassment. Dream growled out, "Okay guys, *stop*. It's not that funny and Sapnap was just joking around!"

Everyone seemed to get the message because they awkwardly stopped laughing or cleared their throats. Sapnap whispered something to George that sounded like apologies and Dream internally groaned.

Sapnap just had to joke about it....now George probably won't look him in the eye for the rest of the week!

Apparently Dream was wrong. Later that night, as they were both getting ready to sleep. The air was filled with awkwardness. George had eventually calmed down earlier as Sapnap kept apologizing to him, saying he joked inappropriately and wouldn't do it again.

After Dream took off his mask for the night, he turned to look at George and frowned. Was George

really okay? He seemed uncomfortable earlier....was that because of all the attention or because he didn't like the idea of getting together with Dream?

An uncomfortable pang of pain made him wince. Dream thought about everything that happened during the day, all the blushes, comments, and touches he shared with George. That wasn't normal and he wondered how much George understood.

He apparently understood enough to know he was gay. Didn't that mean he would know when Dream was seriously flirting with him or not? How he was acting in the woods made it seem like he didn't mind Dream's advances.

So maybe Dream had a chance to confess his feelings here? He felt as scared as before as he didn't want to lose George but he knew that if he didn't do it while he felt he had a chance then he'd *never* do it.

Dream glanced at George again as the smaller male fixed some of the blankets he used, "Uh...George?"

He was surprised when George looked up at him, hesitantly looking him in the face. Dream pushed through, "Are you okay now? I know you were uncomfortable earlier...."

Something flashed through George's eyes and he looked down at the blankets, shrugging, "I'm good....I know they were just joking. I guess I was just embarrassed that everyone seemed to think we would be together....."

"Yeah..." Dream replied numbly, his heart racing in his chest. He was embarrassed about it but not uncomfortable with it? Or was he also uncomfortable that they thought that? Ugh! Why was this so hard to figure out?!

"Are.....are *you* okay? You seemed bothered by it," George asked as he hesitantly looked at Dream again, twisting his sleeves. Dream blinked.

George was still concerned about Dream even though *he* was the one that looked ready to pass out before? Dream's heart, although still racing, felt warm. George really did care for Dream, even if after this it wasn't in the way Dream wanted.

"I'm okay. I wasn't bothered by it I was just scared that it made *you* uncomfortable," Dream answered honestly and George glanced at him, surprised, "Sometimes I wish it were true."

Dream's eyes widened at what he blurted out and he looked at George in alarm when George's surprise expression turned into one of confusion, "You wished what were true?"

"Uh...." Dream waffled, frozen. He was pretty sure he almost flatlined just then.

But this was his chance, right? A lot of signs were there... and wouldn't he feel better if he just told George instead of agonizing over the possibilities everyday?

Dream took in a deep breath to calm himself and looked at George seriously, "I meant...I *do* want to get together with you....as in a romantic relationship. I-I love you George...."

George's eyes widened and he leaned back like someone just told him the sky was falling but Dream was still surprised that George looked directly at him instead of looking down.

Immediately Dream was freaking out, his heart hammering in his chest so quickly that he felt like he was going to throw up. All the courage he felt in that tiny moment disappeared. Oh god, he said it. *Why* did he say it? *Why* did he think this would work?!

Why did he *ever* think George could love him in such a way?!

"You....y-you what?" George whispered and Dream panicked even more when he noticed tears forming in George's eyes. He stood up so suddenly that it made Dream flinch, "Did you....you just said....*what*?"

He couldn't take back what he'd done now. Dream was pretty sure he never felt so defeated. His shoulders slumped and he looked at his toes instead of at George, "I...I'm sorry. I didn't know you'd take it so bad."

He swallowed heavily, closing his eyes at the crushing feeling of rejection he felt in his chest, "I'm in love with you George. I'm not lying. I've known for awhile. You're everything to me..."

"A-And I know you're new to this sort of thing or don't understand it but if by the *billion* chance that you might feel the same way, we can take things slow," Dream rushed to say, his hands shaking sporadically, his nerves on fire, "If you can't feel the same way as me, I understand. I just....*God*, I just really hope you won't stop being my friend now..."

He froze when he heard a little sob and gasp of breath. Oh God, was George crying? Dream quickly looked up anxiously and was met with the image of George standing there, shaking with his hands covering his face as he cried.

"Y-You really...." George gasped out, moving his fingers to show his reddening eyes, "Y-You're really not joking....oh my God..."

"W-What?" Dream felt confused now. Was he upset at him?

George sniffled and breathed in deeply before wiping his cheeks with both hands, "How could I not love you back Dream? Especially after *that*? I.....literally *no one* cares about me the way that you do. No one is considerate of me like *you* are...."

Dream felt his heart stop, his own eyes tearing up at the words, "What? George, you....you aren't playing with me right?"

George gave a watery laugh and shook his head, "Of course not stupid...w-who jokes about being in love like this?"

Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God. This is real? Dream rushed forward and pulled George into a crushing hug. George gasped as his nose mashed against Dream's shoulder. Dream wrapped both arms around George's waist and desperately held back tears, "This isn't a dream, right? You really have feelings for me too?"

George laughed again, sounding calmer this time, "Of course but...was that supposed to be a pun?"

Dream blinked parting from the hug enough to look at George's face. He realized what he said and then chuckled, "Oh...no...no its wasn't..."

"I, uh, I have something to confess to you Dream...." George said as he swallowed audibly. Dream rose an eyebrow, still feeling on a high after all of that, "Bad and Sapnap....they both talked me through my feelings about you because I didn't know the extent of what they were. I literally just found out today..."

Dream's eyes widened, "Oh...well there's nothing wrong with that George, considering you're childhood..."

"I-I'm still sure of my feelings though so don't worry!" George assured immediately and Dream smiled, finding it cute of him, "And...I'm still a little scared of things changing between us...."

"It'll be alright Georgie," Dream soothed, resting his head on top of George's and feeling incredibly pleased, "We'll take things slow."

"Yeah...." George grinned, feeling a sense of relief so strong it felt like it settled in his bones. He sighed, leaning further into Dream's hold, "I'm just glad you could see me that way at all."

Dream snorted, amused, "I wasn't very good at hiding it George."

"Apparently I wasn't either," George laughed and Dream chuckled into his hair, "Guess we're both stupid then."

Dream smiled, Guess so...but you know what just occurred to me? If Sapnap and Bad weren't such nosy friends this might not have happened."

George laughed louder, "I'm sure they would have found other ways..."

"True," Dream smirked and then leaned back. George leaned back as well, confused as to why Dream moved. Dream glanced down at George's lips, "Can....can I kiss you George? Just a quick kiss, I promise! I just have really been wanting to..."

George's eyes widened and he blushed but it was incredibly reassuring that Dream asked first and checked in with him. Especially after he admitted to being afraid of change. George smiled, feeling love ooze out of him for this man that was *unusually* considerate of him.

"Okay," George nodded and laughed a little when Dream's whole face lit up. He tried to calm his hammering heart as Dream leaned down, using one hand to tilt George's face by his chin.

George closed his eyes, little butterflies forming in his stomach from the nerves and anticipation. And then he felt warm soft lips on his and gasped as Dream slowly moved his lips against George's, hesitant, like he was afraid of scaring George off.

George absolutely melted and although he didn't have a clue what he was doing, he pushed his lips back against Dream's. He gasped when Dream pulled him closer by the hand on his chin and deepened the kiss quickly before disconnecting their lips.

He opened his eyes to look into awe-struck yellowish eyes and George smiled, feeling giddy that he was able to make Dream look like that while barely doing anything. Dream smiled back.

"We should probably go to sleep now," George murmured and Dream nodded wordlessly, his eyes going back to George's lips before roaming over George's face. George felt himself flush.

"Can we cuddle?" Dream asked hopefully and George knew he'd probably never be able to say no to Dream.

"Of course we can," George laughed softly and as Dream pulled him towards the bedding, Dream wondered if he were allowed to feel this happy.

So they're finally together!!!

Also if anyone is confused,

Tubbo moment will be explained in a different chapter!

I felt like this might not have been my best writing but maybe that's just me overthinking things!

If you have feedback at all, I'd love to hear it! I'm always wanting to improve! Hope you didn't mind the corniness! ☺

Chapter 21

Chapter Summary

Dream enjoys the perks of his love being requited, the group begins to travel, and Dream and Tubbo open up to each other.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I've been hella busy and this chapter is a bit shorter than I usually like to write, but I wanted to get something out to you guys before I get busier! 😊

Prepare yourself for more fluff and angst! Also I gave T ability and I'll explain more in the ending note to not spoil anything. It's nothing crazy but I just always felt it suited him! Hope you guys agree with me!

Again, thanks for all your continued support! Happy reading!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream woke up the next morning to the sound of a bustling camp. He could hear the murmurs of other people and their quick footsteps as they rushed around camp. He blearily blinked, his body feeling heavy and then looked down when something shifted against his chest.

He saw a mop of straight dark brown hair snuggled right under his collarbone and his heart skipped a beat as his brain flashed through the memories of the previous day. Holy fuck....he actually confessed to George and got confessed to in return! He was George's boyfriend now.

Dream could just imagine the look on his friends' faces when he told them the news. Sapnap was most likely going to be the worst. He grinned, biting his lip to contain it. As much as he'd like to just lay here and hold his new boyfriend, Dream knew they were supposed to be packing their things away. They were leaving for their new home in a matter of hours after all.

"George, wake up," Dream said softly, unwinding his arms around the smaller male to gently shake his shoulder. George huffed but showed signs of waking up.

His brown eyes peeled open and Dream's heart melted at the sleepy look on his face. George was just so cute; literally *so* cute! Dream leaned down and kissed George's forehead, nearly overwhelmed by the sickeningly sweet feelings of love and affection he felt for George.

"What was that for...?" George trailed off quietly, though his eyes lit up and he smiled a little.

Dream smiled back, "It's a good morning kiss I guess. Was it too much?"

George let out a series of cute gasp-like laughs, "In what world is that too much? You're underestimating me."

Dream laughed with him and reluctantly parted with his boyfriend, leaning away to sit up and stretch as he teasingly replied, "You're the one that said you were scared of things changing between us."

"Yeah but I meant other things," George retorted, blushing slightly as he said this. Dream's eyes widened at him and he felt his own cheeks flood with heat. Oh...*oh*. This boy is clearly out to *kill* him.

Dream desperately changed the subject so he didn't start letting him think about those other not so innocent things, "We need to start packing up our stuff...."

"Yeah, true," George jumped on the conversation change, obviously still flustered about what he admitted. Dream helped George roll up their bed supplies and then pulled together their belongings, stuffing them into his bag.

"It's technically not ours but I guess we should go out and take down the tent now," Dream shuffled, checking his surroundings to make sure they didn't miss or forget anything. George nodded, shrugging on a spare navy blue backpack.

Dream hesitated before glancing at George again. He stepped closer to him and grabbed his hand to stop him from leaving the tent. George turned to him in confusion, "Hey, you don't mind if I, like, tell people we're together, right?"

George snorted in amusement, his brown eyes lighting up once more, "Of course I don't, they already thought it was sure thing anyways."

Dream felt relieved and chuckled, tightening his hand on George's, "Great cause I wanna brag that you're *mine* now."

His reaction was one Dream would never forget. George's eyes widened and his face turned a flattering shade of red. He was obviously shocked and he looked away from Dream's eyes, shuffling like he was embarrassed but Dream still saw how his lips curled up ever so slightly. He filed that information away for later.

"W-Well that's alright...." George stammered and Dream grinned toothily, his grin widening when he noticed George eyeing him, "Don't forget your mask."

"Ah, I almost did forget for real," Dream laughed, feeling giddy and he felt for his mask which was tucked onto the top of his head, something he was slowly getting more used to doing when he was with George.

Dream froze, however, when George reached up and pulled the mask down over his face for him before giving the masked smile a quick peck. George turned red after that and immediately looked away shyly.

"Alright, guess we have some more packing and bragging to do, huh?" George said slowly, turning to look him in the eye hesitantly, obviously still shy but Dream appreciated that George was leaning more out of his comfort zone for him.

"God, I'm so in love with you," Dream laughed out and George's eyes widened when Dream leaned his weight on him, throwing his arms over George's shoulders, "Yeah, let's go!"

They opened the flap to their tents and came face to face with an awkward looking Technoblade in front of them. They both froze, the air charged awkwardly and Dream cleared his throat, "So, uh, hi?"

George let out a series of cute hysterical laughs like he couldn't help himself and Dream grinned because he was a love-struck fool. Techno rose an eyebrow at them, "Hello....I just came by to make sure you both were awake...."

"Obviously we were," Dream smirked as George continued laughing.

"Yup," Techno rocked back on his heels, "So, uh, you're together *now*? Or were you just keeping your relationship a secret before?"

Dream laughed in disbelief and George laughed harder, "We're together now."

"Well congratulations," Techno replied monotonously.

"Thank you," Dream grinned, glancing at George. George noticed him looking and smiled a little, making his heart skip a beat.

"I came by for another reason," Techno spoke up, clearing his throat. Dream and George looked at him, confused, "After you've packed up your tent and belongings I was hoping you'd offer to help the others do the same so this'll go by faster."

"Of course," George nodded and then he looked curious, "How are we traveling with all this stuff?"

Techno smirked, "When we planned this mission we went ahead and assumed that there might be more people there when we rescued Wilbur, so we have a bunch of platforms on wheels to let everyone ride on. The rest of us have horses that'll pull the platforms."

"Ah, that's actually a good idea," Dream commented, his eyes widening thoughtfully, "It'll suck riding on a platform for that long though."

"Not much different than riding on a horse for that long either," Techno shrugged and Dream hummed in agreement, "Alright, I'll leave you to it. I need to go make sure Tommy is doing as he's told."

"Probably not," George joked and Dream chuckled. They still haven't known Tommy long, but it was obvious the guy was a walking definition of a chaotic rebellious teenager.

"He will unless he wants to face Phil's parental wrath," Techno shrugged once again, like this wasn't new. George laughed.

Techno left soon after that and Dream immediately got to work unhooking and tying up the tent that he and George used. George helped him quietly the whole time, that daydreaming look to his eye. For once it didn't bother Dream because George looked pretty content.

After that, they hauled their stuff to where Purpled was directing people to place their packed up tents and other belongings that didn't fit in a bag, which wasn't much. Dream noticed that Purpled was looking at him, studying him and he gave a small wave to the male, who startled before nodding at him as a form of greeting.

"Have you talked to him much?" George asked him curiously as they walked away hand-in-hand. Dream glanced down at him.

"No, not really," Dream answered honestly, glancing over his shoulder. Purpled was back to work directing people, not looking at him anymore, "Maybe he's just curious about me."

"I imagine most people are," George grinned and Dream smirked, turning back to look at him. He never really thought about it much before, but George was so much shorter than him that it was cute. He really liked that and how easy George fit into him whenever they hugged.

"Especially *you*," Dream grinned out as he bumped George playfully with his hip. To his delight George barely blushed and laughed, bumping him back.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever," He replied and both of their attention was stolen when someone shouted their names.

They looked up and noticed Karl waving them down, Sapnap and Quackity by his side trying to take apart their tent. Karl's eyes drifted down to their intertwined hands as they drifted closer, "Ah, platonic hand-holding so early in the morning. I'm down for that."

"Ohhh, me too. Gotta love platonic hand-holding," Sapnap teased as he smiled at Dream and George, "Morning love birds."

George laughed, blushing only slightly and Dream grinned, eyeing Sapnap's face when he said eagerly, "Morning. Oh and it's not *platonic* hand-holding."

"Huh?" Quackity looked confused, like he missed the whole conversation. Sapnap only took a moment before he apparently understood. The metal bar holding up their tent that was in his hands dropped on his foot and he gasped, "Ow, fuck! No way!"

"What?" Karl gasped out, rushing to help Sapnap pick the bar back up while Quackity folded and tied up the cloth of their tent. Sapnap was barely paying attention to what he was doing though, he was looking at Dream and George, who were too busy laughing at Sapnap's reaction.

"Are you guys being serious?! You're together?!" Sapnap finally shouted, his eyes lighting up in such a way that Dream couldn't tease him for it.

"Yup, we are now," Dream nodded happily, squeezing George's hand. Quackity gasped and Karl's mouth dropped open. George chuckled.

"Holy shit, YES!" Sapnap fist-pumped the air and Karl started laughing, "I thought I was doomed to life-long third-wheeling at this point!"

"Whatever Sapnap," George rolled his eyes, "You're so dramatic!"

"I'm actually the *best* wingman ever," Sapnap smirked smugly, "I got you guys to finally confess to each other."

"He has a point," Dream commented, glancing at George who huffed, rolling his eyes.

"Yes, but you literally embarrassed me in front of everyone last night," George pouted and Dream stared at his plump pink lips. He was so unfairly beautiful. It wasn't fair how lucky he was.

"Oh wow, you have your hooks deep in this guy George," Karl laughed, leaning back against Sapnap's arm. Dream jumped, not realizing how hard he was staring at George's lips until George glanced at him and blushed, looking at the ground.

Sapnap and Quackity started laughing as well and soon the three males were almost inconsolable, "Dream is so whipped, oh my God!"

"I'm *not* whipped," Dream protested and Quackity grinned, raising an eyebrow.

"Definitely possessive though," He commented and Dream closed his mouth, unable to say anything. He always knew he was highly possessive when it came to things and people he liked. Though he can't remember ever feeling this possessive over his ex.

"Hey, possessiveness is pretty hot," Karl joked, winking at George. George rolled his eyes but his lips curled into a smile, "I wish someone felt *that* much about me that they looked at someone like Dream looked at Quackity last night when he was hanging all over George."

Dream flushed and George blinked, his eyes widening, "What do you mean?"

"Oh George you clueless boy," Quackity laughed out, shaking his head. Sapnap chuckled, "Dream looked ready to rip my throat out just because I was leaning on you last night!"

George rose an eyebrow and looked at Dream, who was pointedly staring at the grass. Karl giggled, watching them, "Alright, enough teasing guys. We need to go help others move their stuff."

"True," Sapnap sighed, rolling one of his shoulders, "I'm honestly just ready to leave."

"Same!" Quackity jumped up and down, smiling wide, "Let's hurry up then! I wanna see the look on other peoples' faces when they find out George and Dream are finally together."

"*Finally....*" George parroted, shaking his head. Dream squeezed his hand, amused.

"Hey, we are genuinely happy for you guys by the way," Karl turned to them, smiling warmly. George and Dream paused before smiling back. They then glanced at each other.

They really did have good friends.

Together they all went around helping others pack up stuff until finally its all packed up on the horses and platforms. It took almost three hours to pack up everything but it felt satisfying when they were finally done, not a spec of anything left to give away that they'd been there.

Techno helped divide people so that the platforms weren't overloaded in weight and, miraculously, it all worked out. Dream ended up on one platform trailer with George, Sapnap, Quackity, Karl, and Antfrost.

They'd taken off once everyone was settled in the platforms and Techno led the traveling group onwards on a single brown horse that Dream swore he heard him call Carl.

Although the platforms weren't the most comfortable thing to be riding on, Dream wasn't going to complain about the free ride. He was able to just sit with his boyfriend and friends, enjoying the nice weather.

"It's going to be such a long ride back to Techno's village," Karl sighed, leaning against Sapnap's shoulder. Dream snickered when Sapnap tensed briefly before relaxing, shooting Dream a funny look that he laughed at.

Karl was sitting beside Sapnap on the left side of the platform with Quackity on the right side with Antfrost. George and Dream were sitting side by side against the back of the platform. Dream glanced at George.

"How do you know its going to be such a long way?" Antfrost questioned, looking confused.

"I overheard Phil and Techno telling someone it'd be about a two days ride," Karl groaned and Sapnap playfully patted his head, "Once we get there and find a place to stay I'm passing out for a week."

Quackity laughed, "I hear that!"

"I wonder how we get to chose our living arrangements," Antfrost commented and Dream perked up, his eyes widening. George looked at him in confusion from where he'd been leaning against Dream's arm tiredly.

"I hope we get to chose for ourselves," Dream said thoughtfully and Sapnap shrugged. Dream glanced at George, who was still staring at him in confusion, "I wanted to live close to you and Sapnap."

George's eyes lit up and Sapnap looked at them, "Oh yeah, you did say that before...."

"I want to live close to you guys too!" Quackity butt in with a cry, a smile forming on his face.

Dream ignored him for the moment, still looking at George. He felt hesitant but he wanted to get his question out of the way, "Actually, if you're comfortable with it....why don't you just live with me?"

George's eyes widened, "Oh, I kind of already thought that's what you meant before."

Dream's eyes widened this time, "Wait really? You don't mind?"

"Of course not," George rose an eyebrow, "We've been bunking together pretty much since we met. I think I'd feel odd being by myself after that."

"Oh...true," Dream didn't think about that. He smiled, feeling elated that he'd get to stay under the same roof as his boyfriend.

"Never mind I don't wanna live close to you guys anymore," Quackity said suddenly and they both looked at him, confused. Karl chuckled, stilling leaning his head on Sapnap's shoulder, "I don't wanna live close to you guys to have to hear you going at it."

Dream and George both sputtered, turning red while Sapnap, Karl, and Antfrost laughed loudly together. Dream felt himself grow hot at the impure images that brought to his mind.

George in his lap on the couch, George bent over a table or a countertop, George laying under him in the bed they'd share at night-

Dream immediately slapped his face hard and purposefully, startling them all including George. *'Fuck, calm the fuck down! You literally just started dating!'* Dream thought desperately. He shifted, thinking of something else to calm himself down.

"You good dude?" Sapnap smirked playfully, the little shit, like he knew exactly what Dream had been thinking about. Dream hated Sapnap sometimes. Dream mustered up the dirtiest look he could and Sapnap laughed.

"Are you sure you want to live with him, George?" Antfrost teased, unable to help himself.

To his surprise George nodded easily, his blush dissipating a little, "Yeah, of course I do. Besides, I trust Dream."

Dream felt a different kind of warmth flow through him this time and he smiled, his own blush and dirty thoughts disappearing as he shifted closer to lean against his boyfriend. George was too good; too good for him, "Thank you George...."

"Ugh, I am *so* single," Antfrost complained which set Karl and Quackity off, laughing until they had tears in their eyes. George and Sapnap chuckled at Ant.

"Maybe you'll find someone in Techno's village," Sapnap grinned and Antfrost sighed, shrugging one shoulder.

Dream tuned them out and looked at George, grabbing his hand and flipping it over so he could draw little patterns into his palm. George looked at him and his smile widened as he watched his fingers. Dream was content in the moment surrounded by stupidly amazing friends and a cute pure boyfriend.

They traveled uninterrupted for nearly four hours before Techno called the group to a stop so that they could all eat lunch and to water the horses. Philza mostly traveled on his own with his homemade elytra, as George explained to him when Dream noticed it again on Phil, and he landed on the ground to inform everyone that the area seemed secure so everyone felt better about stopping.

"I'm actually going to go find Ponk. There's some things I want to ask him about regarding my new job," George told Dream, smiling up at him teasingly, "You'll be fine without me for an hour right?"

"Brat," Dream laughed, unable to help himself. He poked George hard in the side and George yelped, swatting his hand away with a strangled laugh, "Of course I will."

"Alright, see you in a bit," George grinned out and Dream felt like he was still riding on that cloud nine from last night as he nodded, watching George leave for a minute.

George seemed to be getting more and more comfortable in his own skin and with Dream now that they'd confessed their feelings to each other. Dream wondered if all the hesitancy and shyness before was only due to the fact that George didn't know Dream was in love with him.

Whatever it was, Dream was definitely happy to see George being more of his usual self, unrestrained and cheeky. Dream realized he was just standing there and turned to Sapnap, who was busy helping Karl and Antfrost spread a blanket on the ground for them to sit on.

"I'm gonna go walk around for a minute," Dream said aloud and Sapnap glanced at him with a brow raised, "I'm too hyped up to be sitting around."

Sapnap laughed at him, a knowing look in his eyes and teased, "Alright, just don't get lost...."

"Fuck off!" Dream rolled his eyes and jumped when Bad yelled '*language!*' across the way with Skeppy laughing by his side. He laughed loudly, shaking his head at his friends before walking off.

He walked around aimlessly, nodding his head at Nikki and Puffy sitting together eating sandwiches when he passed. He weaved through until he was further away from all the people settling down to eat.

Eventually he was shocked when he came across the lone figure of Tubbo, sitting upon some rocks by a small little creek. He wouldn't have thought anything of it until he saw the small boy's face, cracked of it's usual cheery façade.

Dream felt a bit concerned about the dark circles under the boy's eyes and the way he was slumped over. Should he talk to him? He wasn't really close to Tubbo and maybe he wanted to be left alone....

Tubbo glanced around and when he noticed Dream just standing there he jumped, eyes widening. He immediately put on a smile that made Dream frown, "Oh hey Dream! You scared the *heck* outta me!"

"Sorry....mind if I sit with you...?" Dream asked hesitantly. He wasn't the best at making new friends.

Tubbo seemed hesitant too and Dream was about to backtrack until Tubbo nodded, "Uh, sure....I might not be the best company though."

"That's okay," Dream reassured and sat on another rock by Tubbo's side. He glanced at the creek mindlessly, "Where's Tommy? Every time I see one of you the other is usually there."

"Ah, he's getting something to eat from Wilbur I think," Tubbo said his voice cracking but Dream didn't comment because he knew Tubbo wouldn't want him to, "I also kind of dipped to be alone for a minute."

"I can go if you want me too," Dream immediately said though he felt concerned, something was obviously upsetting the usually cheerful boy and he couldn't help but remember yesterday in the woods with the bandits.

"N-No, it's alright...." Tubbo denied, shaking his head for extra measure.

"So, um, how are you doing? You look dead on your feet," Dream winced at how that came out but Tubbo chuckled, shifting his glance to the ground as he swung his feet anxiously.

"Y-Yeah, uh, I haven't been.....haven't been sleeping good. Nightmares," Tubbo admitted quietly, continuously glancing at Dream like he was afraid to be made fun of. Dream's heart clenched.

"Oh, that sucks," Dream frowned, "I'm sorry to hear that."

"It'll be alright....I've been here before and I just have to deal with it," Tubbo spoke up with an odd tone of wisdom to his voice, "It's just hard sometimes....to deal with it I mean..."

Dream looked at him contemplatively. Tubbo reminded him so much of himself in the past that it was almost eerie, "You know....before I met George *I* used to have a lot of nightmares....about traumatic things I'd been through."

Tubbo's eyes widened and he looked at Dream in shock, "R-Really?"

"Yeah," Dream nodded comfortably, shifting on the rock he was sitting on, "I'd have many nightmares about Sapnap being dead; that I was chasing his ghost all these years. I'd have nightmares about people I'd killed; about all the times I'd gotten too violent because I'm such an aggressive person and hurt innocents."

Tubbo's eyes were still wide but something like understanding darkened in his blue eyes, "Oh....how.....how did *you* deal with it....?"

Dream glanced down at his hands, "Well, everyone deals with their trauma and nightmares differently. For me, I did little tasks to get me through the day and practiced swordsmanship until I dropped or bled to avoid dwelling on things...."

Tubbo nodded and he cracked a small sad smile, "Explains why you're such a good fighter...."

Dream huffed out a soft laugh, "Yeah, I guess so. Thanks..."

"Be-Before I entered Technoblade's village, I'd escaped as a prisoner to a man I can't really recall the name of...." Tubbo admitted, looking at Dream's mask like he was trying to gauge his reaction.

Dream froze, his eyes widening. Tubbo continued slowly, "I became that man's prisoner because.....because my family sold me to pay off a debt."

"Oh...." Dream gasped, his eyes lighting up in understanding. Tubbo was triggered by the bandit's threat of selling Ranboo off. No wonder he'd been so upset! "That's terrible...."

Tubbo shrugged, his hands shaking. He stuffed his hands between his knees and continued, "I was basically a slave and he owned a big farm. I had to keep the place clean and take care of the animals. It wouldn't have been that bad but....he was a violent person and he would hit me...."

Oh Tubbo *no*.....Dream scowled, anger growing in his chest. Tubbo sighed, ducking his head, "I have this thing....with animals. They don't attack me for some reason unless I provoke them purposefully; even the ones that usually attack people don't bother me. And I can charm bees which makes it easy for me to get honey."

Dream's eyes widened, intrigued despite the sad undertones to his story, "Really? I'd like to see that

one day."

Tubbo blinked up at him and smiled a little, "Okay...anyways, to not bore you with too many details.... I escaped with several other slaves I'd managed to convince to fight with me. We went our separate ways afterwards and I found Technoblade's village."

"You're pretty damn brave," Dream smirked, hoping to cheer him up. Tubbo glanced at him and smiled, a bit brighter this time.

"Thank you. I guess I wanted to tell you that to explain that sometimes I get in this violent headspace like what happened in the woods which is what I'm been having nightmares about," Tubbo explained and Dream nodded in understanding, "Tommy and I have an inside joke where we jokingly call me *Big Crime* during the time that I'm in that headspace."

"Tommy knows what you told me?" Dream asked for clarification. He remembered what Techno and Phil said about Tubbo only opening up to Tommy.

Tubbo nodded, "I told Tommy everything and Ranboo knows that I've been sold before but that's it. Tommy really cares about me so I didn't mind telling him and while he tries to understand me, he *can't*. Not really."

"But I know after what you told me that *you'd* understand me," Tubbo smiled a little, looking at Dream again, "To be honest, I'm surprised you opened up to me like that."

Dream shrugged, blushing a little in embarrassment, "You remind me of myself....that's why."

Tubbo grinned, looking a little more cheerful, "Does that mean I'll also grow into a badass?"

"Probably," Dream teased and Tubbo laughed.

"I feel a bit better getting all that out," Tubbo smiled brightly, "Thanks Dream! And I promise I won't tell anyone what you told me."

"It's not really a secret but thanks," Dream smiled back, "I think everyone's already realized by now how aggressive I am."

"But you wouldn't hurt innocent people," Tubbo pointed out with that same smile, "So I wouldn't worry. You're not as scary as you think you are....at least not to *me*."

Dream laughed, delighted, "Thanks. Just promise me one thing, alright? One day you have to show me and George how you charm bees."

Tubbo beamed, "Okay!"

"Tubbo!"

Dream and Tubbo both turned, seeing Tommy running towards them with an annoyed yet concerned look to his face. He was carrying an armful of apples and bread. He stopped, shooting Dream a look before staring at Tubbo, "Why'd ya run off? I was looking for you for forever now!"

"Bet its only been a few minutes," Dream teased and Tommy glared at him.

"Whatever!"

"Sorry Tommy, I just needed a minute to talk to Dream," Tubbo grinned brightly and Tommy studied Tubbo for a moment before shrugging, throwing an apple and piece of bread at the boy, "Thanks!"

"No problem," Tommy replied and turned to Dream with a shit-eating grin that already annoyed Dream, "Oh and I heard the news by the way! Congrats on scoring your lover finally!"

Tubbo gasped before Dream could really retort to that, his baby blue eyes lighting up in delight, "Oh that's awesome! You're together now!"

"Yeah....thanks," Dream grinned ignoring the look Tommy gave him.

"I just don't to see any of that PDA crap," Tommy warned him and Dream rolled his eyes hard enough that it was no wonder it didn't hurt. Tubbo laughed.

"Then don't watch," Dream said simply and Tommy scoffed, offended.

"*Dreammmmm!!!!*"

All three males turned to see Wilbur running up to them, waving excitedly like an excitable idiot. Tommy laughed and Dream rose an eyebrow when Wilbur finally made it to him, "Hello Wilbur...."

"I *literally* just heard the news from Techno! You scored George! Awesome!" Wilbur grinned brightly and Dream couldn't help but laugh at the wording. Scored? Tommy just said the same thing not even a minute ago, "I was rooting for you man!"

"Uh, thanks," Dream laughed out as he shook his head.

Wilbur turns to look at Tommy and Tubbo before gasping, "Tubbo, you look horrible!"

"Gee, thanks," Tubbo rolled his eyes and protested when Wilbur grabbed his face, turning it left and right to examine it, "Stop!"

"Wil did you have alcohol or something?" Tommy asked with a mischievous grin. Wilbur rolled his eyes.

"No, I'm just worried. Look at him! He looks like he hasn't slept in days!" Wilbur gestured to Tubbo, who shied away a little. Tommy frowned but didn't comment.

"I'm fine now...I just had a little trouble sleeping," Tubbo sighed and rubbing one of his eyes before looking at Dream gratefully, "But I think I'll sleep better tonight now."

Tommy and Wilbur both looked at Dream in confusion but said nothing. Wilbur eventually pulled Dream aside as Tommy started fussing for Tubbo to eat before the apple goes bad, "You talked with Tubbo?"

"Yeah," Dream nodded without giving details. Wilbur's playfulness left him and he looked serious as gratitude flashed through his eyes.

"Thanks for looking out for him then," Wilbur said with a smile. Dream felt a bit embarrassed but shrugged.

"He just reminds me of myself sometimes, that's all," Dream replied, rubbing one arm.

"Well even though you don't know him well yet you were still there for him. You're a good person Dream. Thanks again," Wilbur grinned and clasped a hand on Dream's shoulder.

Dream felt both surprised and happy that Wilbur thought that and smiled back, "No problem..."

"We better hurry back. Techno will asking to pack up soon," Wilbur sighed and turned to look at the kids, "You two! Eat that on the way we gotta go back."

"Awwww...." Tommy complained and Tubbo shrugged, in the middle of eating his apple.

They went back to find the others already beginning to pack up and get back on the horses and platforms. Dream met back up with George and George was immediately curious, "Hey, took you forever. Where'd you go?"

"I was just talking with Tubbo," Dream answered honestly and George squeaked in surprise when Dream pulled him to sit in front of him, George's back against Dream's chest.

Sapnap laughed hard, "What was that noise George?!"

George ignored their laughing friends and Dream wrapped his arms around George's middle as he shifted into a more comfortable before relaxing in Dream's arms, "This....this is pretty nice."

Dream grinned toothily, squeezing him slightly, "I think so too."

"So what did you and Tubbo talk about? Is he alright?" George asked, his brow furrowing as he struggled to look up at Dream.

"He's okay now...I know why he was upset yesterday but I'll tell you about it another time, since I know you don't spread things around," Dream explained quietly and George's eyes widened.

He leaned back against Dream again and hummed, "Well, you don't have to tell me his story. There's a reason Tubbo chose to tell *you* and not me after all."

Dream smiled, ducking down to lay his head on George's shoulder and laughing when George scrunched his shoulder up like he was ticklish, "He said it's because we're relatable in some ways."

"That and you are pretty easy to talk to," George said quietly and he placed his hands over Dream's where they were pressed on George's stomach, "It doesn't surprise me that Tubbo opened up to you."

Dream felt butterflies form in his stomach and his heart swelled in his chest as he pushed his face in George's shoulder again, "I really love you."

George laughed and his face turned pink, "I....I l-love you too. It feels so *weird* saying it."

"It's only weird if you make it weird," Dream laughed into George's shoulder.

"*You're* weird," George joked and purposefully shrugged his shoulder that Dream was laying on. Dream laughed again, wheezing.

Tubbo's got a lot going on but he's lucky cause he has so many people that care about him now!

Also, all those fluffy George and Dream moments were a treat to watch. I saw a few fics with the 'Tubbo as Dream's brother' head-cannon and found that I actually adored that idea.

I felt like Tubbo having an ability that makes animals like him/leave him alone fit him! And a bee charmer definitely fit him! If you don't know what that means look it up!

Anyways, what did you guys think? I'd love to hear from you and reply!

Chapter 22

Chapter Summary

Everyone arrives at Techno's village and are stunned by everything they see. Dream and George pick out their new home and relish in how things have worked out for them.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I've had so much on my plate that it was hard to get this out in my usual timing. Things will slow down soon and then I'll be able to get chapters out like I used to but for now it might be a bit slower! Thanks to you all that are concerned and/or understanding about me! It means much more than you know!

There's no warnings for this chapter! I was super anxious about this one because I tried to balance things out and make it not so detailed. So let me know what you think! Thank you for your continued support for this story!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Two days passed in a blink of an eye for George. He felt that the trip would be exhausting, especially since Karl seemed to think so, but George enjoyed every minute of it. It was hard not to when he was surrounded by so many friends and Dream. There were *never* any dull moments with this group.

They were due to arrive at Techno's village in a few hours but it was nearing noon so Techno had everyone stop one last time for a lunch break and to water the horses. George immediately helped Sapnap and the others he'd been riding with set up a blanket on the dirt so that they could comfortably sit together.

The others did something similar until everyone had a place to sit. George had just gotten comfortable when Dream sat close beside him and offered him some bread and jam. George smiled as he took it from his hands, "Thanks."

"No problem," Dream grinned, scooting until they were sitting so close that their arms were touching. George was pretty much used to that. Dream was a very tactile person and liked physical affection. For him to have went so long without it before he met George.....he wasn't sure how Dream withstood it.

George peeked over as the others began to distribute food and eat. He was briefly amused when he saw Ranboo's whole face light up when Tubbo nearly forced him to try some bread and strawberry jam. Tommy laughed at their antics, picking fun that they already acted like a married couple

which flustered both boys.

"Here's some water!" George almost jumped at the voice. He glanced over to see Bad and Hbomb handing out water bottles to everyone.

George smiled when Bad came over to them and handed each of them one, "Thanks Bad."

"You're welcome!" Bad grinned brightly. George could still remember how Bad *literally* freaked out when he learned that George and Dream confessed to each other and were now dating. After freaking out, he proceeded to cheer like someone who was just given a fortune. Their friend sure was a character.

"You're such the opposite of your name," Sapnap laughed and Bad rolled his eyes, throwing a water bottle at Sapnap while Dream and Karl laughed at how the bottle hit Sapnap in the face.

"It's not a bad thing," Quackity said with mirth and George couldn't help but laugh himself at the stupid pun, "Get it? A *bad* thing?"

"That's actually *so* dumb, Quackity," Antfrost barked out a laugh, "You're gonna make me choke on my food..."

George tuned them out when he noticed Dream turned to look at Hbomb, his smile dropping when he saw the other male. George still had some getting used to when it came to the fact that Dream was apparently easily jealous. Or so Sapnap, Karl, and Quackity had been joking about the past two days since they got together. And now that George thought back on some of Dream's actions, he understood that Dream actually *did* get jealous fairly easy.

Poor Hbomb turned immediately when he accidentally met Dream's eyes through the mask and George sighed softly, touching Dream's arm to gain his attention, "You tried this jam yet? Apparently it's apple flavored!"

"I know, that's why I gave it to you," Dream smirked and George blinked at him, "I know how much you like apples and apple juice so I figured you'd like apple jam."

Warmth flooded George's cheeks at his consideration and he ducked his head, "O-Oh...well thanks. Have you tried it though?"

Dream shook his head, "Not personally. I prefer strawberry or traditional grape flavored jam."

"Then how do you know you don't like it if you haven't tried it?" George snickered before gasping when Dream simply bent over and took a bite out of his sandwich, "*Dream!*"

Dream silently laughed, covering his mouth with his hand and after he swallowed he commented, "Well it's good. Not something I'd eat all the time but I definitely don't mind it."

"Knew you would like it," George grumbled before taking a bite himself. He rose an eyebrow when he noticed Dream staring at him, "What?"

"We just shared an indirect kiss," Dream teased, his eyes lighting up when George blushed as his eyes widened in realization. Dream wheezed, "Is it a bad thing?"

"No, I just didn't expect that," George denied and took a sip of his water, "You're ridiculously honest when it comes to your feelings and things like that."

"When it comes to things I want or like then yeah," Dream smirked and leaned on George, "Plus I *love* your reactions. You're really cute."

"And *you're* so annoying sometimes," George growled and Dream laughed. George willed the warmth in his cheeks to go away, "I won't be like this once I've gotten used to it."

"Well I'll look forward to that too," Dream winked and George huffed, playfully pushing his arm.

"You guys won't stop flirting," Sapnap suddenly butted in, sighing like he was disappointed in them, "I *knew* this was going to happen."

"Don't hate cause you're single," Dream joked and George laughed when Sapnap glared over at Dream.

The rest of the lunch break was spent in teasing playfully back and forth while eating. Eventually the others joined in when they realized what was happening and George appreciated how everyone seemed to be steadily getting closer to each other.

Everyone got ready to travel again, but this time it was with excitement in the air. They were only a few hours away. They'd get to their new home before evening and George couldn't be more ready for it.

"Looks like we're almost at the gate," Techno announced just four and a half hours later. George immediately twisted around so that he could see in the distance better. The murmurs of everyone else grew as they, too, looked around.

In the distance George could just make out something tall and black. When he realized what he was looking at, he gasped, "Is that *obsidian*?!"

Everyone else was just as surprised and Phil laughed from where he was riding on a horse next to Techno, "Yes. We have a wall of obsidian around our land for protection. Its been there for a *very* long time from what I've heard."

"Wow so even before you then?" Quackity breathed as his eyes widened. Philza chuckled and nodded his head.

"It's worked wonders at protecting our land and village," Wilbur spoke up proudly as he gazed at the wall in the distance, "Whoever decided to make it happen was a *genius*!"

"That must have taken so many years to build though," Dream frowned as he also studied the wall of obsidian. Still, George could tell that Dream was impressed though mostly stunned.

In no time at all they were getting closer and George could make out an opening in the wall of obsidian. It looked like heavy metal bars obstructed the entrance but once they were close enough, George realized it was a gate that could be pulled upwards to open by pulling a chain from the inside. He wasn't exactly sure how that worked.

Techno turned to look over his shoulder, "Once the doors open I want you all to stick close to me and Philza."

"Yeah, we'll eventually show you around and give you a tour," Phil said kindly, "It'll be a bit overwhelming when you first go in because I *guarantee* you haven't seen a place like this before."

George flinched when something grabbed his hand and squeezed but he realized only a moment later that it was Dream. He glanced over at his boyfriend and flushed when he caught him staring. Dream smiled and whispered, "This is it, George..."

"Yeah...." George whispered back and gave a small smile of his own. Dream seemed just as excited as he was to have a new home. He glanced over his shoulder to see Sapnap's awestruck face and his smile deepened as he turned back around.

Techno urged his horse close to the gate and George noticed the guards inside took one look at him before hurrying to open the gate. It made a loud screech as it opened upwards and Techno jerked his head forward to signal them to follow.

George was practically holding his breath and squeezing Dream's hand when they rode through the gate. His friends were also suspiciously quiet but he wasn't paying that much attention to them at the moment. Once they made it through the gate George inhaled sharply.

The first thing he noticed was how open everything was. There seemed to be buildings everywhere with dirt and/or cobblestone paths connecting almost everything together in some way. In the distance it was hard to miss the giant stone brick castle with multi-colored tinted windows. Most of

the buildings seemed to be made from oak logs, oak planks, cobblestone, and stone bricks. The aesthetic was very pleasing, at least in George's opinion.

However, Phil was right. Everything was already overwhelming. There was just so much everywhere and there appeared to be a lot of people walking about. It really seemed like a bustling village yet village didn't seem like the right word for it. Town? George had never seen *anything* like this. He didn't know a village like this existed!

"Holy shit," Fundy gasped and George flinched when the horses pulling the platforms abruptly stopped.

"Language," Bad breathed but sounded just as distracted. George paid it no mind because he glanced at where they stopped and realized it was a large barn-looking area. Techno and the others on horses were getting off. Dream pulled at George's hand and he blinked over at his boyfriend.

Dream seemed just as awestruck as George but it was hard to tell behind the mask. Dream pulled on George's hand again and they both followed their friends off the platform they'd been riding on. George's body already ached from another long day of riding.

"I know you're tired, but prepare yourself for more walking," Techno said in that monotone voice of his, "I'll lead you to Eret's castle first."

"A fricken *castle* man...." Skeppy shook his head in disbelief from where he stood holding Bad's hand, "I've never seen one in real life before."

"I don't think any of us have dude," Sapnap commented, sounding winded as he also looked around with a stunned Karl by his side. Obviously everyone seemed just as overwhelmed as George felt.

"This way guys! You'll get left behind!" Tommy shouted. George and his friends all jolted, not realizing they were staring off and that Techno was already leading the others away.

Dream kept his fingers interlaced with George's the whole time but that didn't bother George in the slightest. Right now it was actually kind of grounding. George felt like he was walking through something out of his dreams. Granted when he imagined Techno's village he wasn't sure what to expect but this *exceeded* expectations.

Sapnap pointed out some of the market stalls when they passed through a dirt path and George smiled at his excitement. Quackity nearly lost it when he saw just how many buildings there were and a lot of them looked like they had more than one floor. George was extremely impressed.

"We're almost there guys," Tubbo announced cheerfully. George was glad to see that the paleness and dark circles that plagued the boy the other day seemed to be completely gone now.

"T-There's so many people...." Ranboo said shakily and George frowned but understood his anxiety. Many of the people they passed eyed them curiously and George was surprised that many didn't seem to stare at Dream nearly as much as expected. In fact, they mostly stared at Ranboo, poor guy.

"They must not be surprised to see me because Techno also wears a mask," Dream hummed near his ear and George flinched at the proximity. Dream's voice was always soothing and warm, but to hear it so close made him want to shiver. If Dream noticed his reaction he didn't say anything. How did he know what George was thinking about anyway?

George was distracted when Techno led them up another dirt path that led directly to the huge stone brick castle he'd seen before. Once they got close enough, the dirt path turned into cobblestone and they were at the double doors of the castle. Guards were stationed outside but they didn't even glance at them.

The castle had obviously been in its place for quite some time because George could make out some cracks in the stone bricks and places where obvious repairs had been made. George snapped his head back around when he felt something on his back and realized it was just Sapnap's hand.

"Spacing out again George," Sapnap grinned teasingly and gave his back a playful push, "You're slowing us down dude."

George looked to see that Techno had already led some of the others in the castle and gasped. Dream chuckled a little, "Hey, I thought it was cute. He was studying the castle walls so intently just now."

Sapnap rolled his eyes and George pouted at their teasing, pulling Dream along without a word. Both of them laughed at his antics but George ignored that as they caught up with Techno.

The floors looked to be spruce planks and it was fairly open in terms of space with hardly any decorations aside from some paintings, plants, and small tables here and there.

"As I said before, this is Eret's castle. It's where he lives as his family has for many generations and it's where most of our politicians do their work, including me and Philza," Techno explained and he glanced around, "Eret should be on his way to meet you all."

"Eret's a cool guy!" Tubbo grinned but he was looking mostly at the nervous Ranboo, who's arms were almost trembling and George remembered how nervous Ranboo was about drawing negative attention. It was probably even worse after that incident in the woods with those bandits.

"He's kind of *boring* actually," Tommy commented and groaned in pain when Phil quickly swatted the boy in the back of the head, "Ow!"

"Don't be rude Tommy," Phil frowned, crossing his arms and George was slightly amused at the parental display. Wilbur merely snickered at his brother's expense.

"I can't believe how big this place is...." Antfrost spoke up and everyone looked over at him. He was looking around in awe, his eyes all lit up, "This is so cool!"

"I agree!" Karl cheered and Tubbo nodded, equally as excited even though he's lived here. Dream chuckled.

"Oh, sorry if I kept you waiting!" A jovial voice resounded in the room and everyone looked behind Techno to see a young man walking forward intently with a couple of guards behind him.

George blinked, surprised to see that this guy, Eret, was apparently around the same age as most of them. Or at least, he looked it. His skin was creamy in color unlike George's pale skin. He had short brown hair and a thick golden ringlet around his head that was encrusted with jewels. It was different than the crown Techno chose to wear.

Eret wore black glasses that couldn't be seen through but when Eret stopped to stare and study them all, George noted that Eret's eyes were blue like Tommy's. Like Techno, Eret was wearing very formal looking clothes.

"I just received the news that you arrived," Eret smiled and he looked over at Wilbur happily, "I'm glad that you seem well, Wilbur! We were so worried when your letters stopped coming in!"

"Sorry to worry you," Wilbur laughed, waving his hand like he was physically waving the worry off, "I handled myself well."

Eret then turned to face everyone and he smiled just as kindly at George and his friends as he did to Wilbur, "Hello and welcome to my castle! It's very nice to meet you. I'm sure you've already heard about me by now but my name is Eret!"

Everyone returned their greetings and introduced themselves quickly. As soon as they were all done with introducing themselves Techno turned to Phil, "I'm going to talk with Eret for a bit. Do you mind giving everyone a tour?"

"I don't mind. Take care of what you need to," Phil said seriously and patted Techno's shoulder. Techno nodded and pulled Eret out of the room. Phil turned to everyone, "Okay, I'll show you guys the main places that you'll want to remember and then after that I'll be showing you some spare vacant houses that you can choose from to live in!"

"Awesome! I'm *so* ready for it!" Quackity grinned out and Phil chuckled.

"Actually, I'm gonna get going now," Tubbo butt in and everyone looked at the small blonde in surprise. Tubbo smiled, "I wanna go check on my animals and my bees!"

"I'll go with you for a bit! I don't wanna be alone with these guys!" Tommy complained and George blinked when he noticed Dream make a face at Tommy. Dream treated Tommy like a chaotic little brother he mostly fought with. It was kind of amusing.

"Haha, okay!" Tubbo laughed out cheerfully, "See you guys around!"

"B-Bye Tubbo...." Ranboo stammered out and Dream gave a little wave to the smaller blonde before both blonde boys rushed off.

"Well now that *that's* over we should get started," Phil chimed in and he put his hands on his hips, "Make sure you ask me questions because I don't like repeating myself often."

"Sure thing boss!" Quackity joking saluted and Phil rolled his eyes with a fondness that George was surprised to see. Phil was such a nice soul for treating them as nicely as he does. He met them and immediately acted like he was looking after them all. It was probably in his nature after all since he adopted three orphan boys.

"Follow me," Phil gestured and George blinked when two random people came into the room with what looked like paper and pens in their hands. Phil noticed him looking because he smiled, "These two are gonna follow us and write down where you guys will live for our records."

"Don't bother me none," Fundy shrugged as he shuffled almost impatiently. Phil chuckled and gestured with his hand for them to follow him.

George glanced at Dream and saw that he was studying their surroundings. Even though he *seemed* distracted, George knew better than to believe that. Dream was the type of person that could multi-task and was no doubt listening to every word being said despite looking elsewhere.

He gave a little tug to Dream's hand and withheld laughter when Dream whirled around to look at him instantly. George smiled, feeling those familiar butterflies forming in his stomach just because Dream was staring at him.

"The first place is close, I promise," Philza started explaining and George glanced over at him, pulling Dream along with him to follow the others, "Though before we leave I should say that those of you that were interested in political jobs will report here to the castle often!"

"Makes sense," Karl said easily and Quackity nodded hastily, "There's a lot of room here."

"Yeah," Phil nodded in agreement and then he led everyone out of the entrance to the castle. When they reached the dirt path again, Phil led them down until they arrived at a section that split the paths off into four different ways. He took them down the right path first.

"I can already tell I'm going to get *so* lost," Bad sighed defeatedly and Skeppy seemed just as overwhelmed. George couldn't help but snicker at Bad.

Phil chuckled, "Yes I expect it'll take time for most of you to get used to things around here, mate. It's natural in a place this big."

They walked down the path for just a few more moments, passing what looked like various small oak and cobblestone homes. Phil stopped at one place that was a bit bigger than the homes around it and turned to smile at Nikki, "This here is the bakery. There are tables and seats inside for people to eat at. It's like a little hangout if you will."

Wilbur laughed when Nikki's whole face lit up brightly, "Oh my gosh! That sounds *amazing*! I can't wait to see the inside!"

"Another time, mate," Phil laughed before becoming more serious, "There's a house down the road from here. It's small and like all vacant houses it doesn't have much furniture but I'm sure you might like that one so that you could live close to the bakery."

Nikki blinked in awe, "Oh....y-yes that'd be.....that'd be great!"

Phil smiled and nodded at the two men who carried the pen and papers. George noticed how they were already writing things down. Karl cheered for Nikki when she teared up emotionally at the thought of her new job and home. George smiled, happy for her. Dream squeezed his hand in an honest show that he felt the same way.

"Alright and if you take this next right path we'll be right at the smithing place," Philza explained as he walked on directly to where he was talking about.

George and Sapnap laughed when Dream visibly perked up at that. They all followed Philza past the bakery and down the dirt path to the right that lead directly to a large oak building that seemed to be two-story, "This is the smithing place. Both armor-smiths and weapon-smiths can work here together. There is a big forge behind the building that you can't see from here."

"Amazing!" Skeppy exclaimed, looking as star-struck as Dream and Bad giggled. George grinned and nudged Dream with his arm. Dream smirked and nudged him right back.

Phil wasted no time moving on and leading them back the way they came until they were back at that intersection of paths. This time he lead them down the bottom left until they came across more small homes. Everything seemed spacious enough without being *too* open when it came to how close the homes were to each other. George was glad because he didn't want to live *too* closely to a

whole bunch of people. That seemed overwhelming.

They were shown an office that housed ravens that were used to deliver letters to other villages there. George, Bad, and Antfrost were all impressed with that. Fundy ended up taking a vacant house close to there and Antfrost got one that two homes away from him.

It took some time but they were back at the intersection and Phil led them down a back right path that took them past the castle and into an open grassy area. They were shown multiple farms: a chicken farm, a large cow pen area, horse stables, and a large fenced-in area similar to the cow pen that housed the sheep.

Phil explained how some people had their own cattle outside their home but that *this* was the place where most of the cattle went. After being shown that, Phil led them down another path that turned into a cobblestone one. They came across another large building in the same oak and cobblestone theme.

"This is the library where the scholars and librarians work," Phil grinned when Bad cheered excitedly. Dream chuckled under his breath, "They also tend to work at the castle some too since there is a ton of room there."

"Makes sense. It's probably quieter there too," Quackity laughed and Phil shrugged.

"Oh and there is a vacant house down the way that I think you'd probably want to take, mate," Phil smiled kindly at Bad who whirled around to look at Skeppy instantly.

Skeppy laughed, "Okay, we'll take it."

"Yay!" Bad hugged Skeppy happily and George squeezed Dream's hand again, happy for their black-clad friend. Dream squeezed his hand back.

Wilbur jumped in excitedly when they walked down another path that was surprisingly open without many houses around until they came to one single large two-story home, "That's Phil's house!"

Phil rolled his eyes fondly, "Yes, this is my home. I wanted to show you this so that you could know where to find me or Techno. He lives there with me and Tommy though Techno doesn't always stay there. That boy will sleep *anywhere*."

"Same honestly," Karl laughed out and Sapnap laughed with him. Nikki giggled.

"My house is that one across from Phil's!" Wilbur bragged, a smile forming on his face as he pointed to the home in the distance, "This is where I'll leave you guys. I wanna check on Friend!"

"Friend?" George asked curiously and Wilbur nodded with all the excitement of a child.

"Friend is a sheep I raised. I dyed his wool blue and even gave him a collar with a name tag," Wilbur explained as he continued smiling, "He's helped make a lot of blue carpeting and things for decorations!"

"I guess that's good. Color is everything," Quackity teased and Antfrost laughed, startled by what he said.

"Why *blue* though?" Dream questioned and Phil quickly lifted up a hand in a 'stop' motion.

"No! Don't encourage him," Phil sighed, face palming and Wilbur laughed loudly, "I'm sure he'll get into that with you guys one day."

"You say that like I'm *weird*," Wilbur playfully sighed but he said nothing more as he said his goodbyes and rushed off towards his home without another word.

"He *is* a weird one," Sapnap commented and Dream snickered. Karl bumped Sapnap's arm with a smirk.

"You like 'em weird though," He said and Sapnap laughed while Bad groaned, shaking his head at their antics.

"*Anyways*," Phil drawled, shooting Sapnap and Karl a look before he turned, "I'll show you the training area now. It's close by."

"Oh yes!" Sapnap cheered and Skeppy chuckled at him.

"Lead on then, my feet are already *killing* me," Fundy complained and Phil smirked, leading them away.

George stayed silent because, truthfully, his own feet were hurting from all the walking they've done. His hands also seemed to be sweating and he felt a pang of embarrassment that maybe Dream could tell. They were still holding hands after all.

As they followed Phil, George shook off Dream's hand and Dream looked at him in confusion. George blushed and wiped his hands on his pants quickly. Dream just chuckled at him and grabbed his hand again once he was done. Did he really like holding hands that much?

George felt a fluttering of affection in his chest and resisted the urge to grin. He knew it'd look

stupid if he did. His attention was stolen when Phil cleared his throat and pointed to a large area down the path they were on, "There's the training area. It's where the warriors spar and where you can work on archery skills."

Sure enough, there were fancy looking targets lined up and there was a small building off to the side of them where George assumed the warriors kept extra supplies and weapons. Or maybe it was just a place for them to rest.

There were already people there practicing archery and in another small place on the other side of the building there were people sparring. George glanced at Dream's face and almost laughed out loud at the bright look to his eyes. Well, at least Dream's happy.

"There's some vacant houses down this path to the left," Phil explained as he led them past the training area.

Karl and Quackity claimed one of them that was further down and had two stories because they wanted to live together. Sapnap immediately claimed the one right beside theirs. It had enough space in between so it wasn't a far walk.

"Why don't we take the one beside Sapnap's then?" Dream whispered to him and George smiled, nodding. He liked the look of it anyways. And he wasn't the picky type. Plus it worked out perfectly!

"We'll take that other one," Dream spoke up and Phil grinned like he already saw that coming and nodded towards the two people with papers. George felt excitement building inside him.

The house they'd just claimed was, of course, oak with a cobblestone base like most of the others. It seemed to be large enough for two people but not too big to take care of which George loved. He also liked that there seemed to be a small second floor to this home just like Sapnap and Karl's homes. It was also a bonus to live close to his friends.

"Oh hey, it's Tubbo!" Fundy gasped and everyone turned to him. He was pointing down the hill behind George and Dream's newly claimed home.

George moved to look where he was pointing and saw a single home far down the hill behind their house. It was secluded but still close enough to Dream, Karl, and Sapnap's home that it wasn't a far walk. George could see Tubbo walking around in what looked to be a place made of glass.

"That's his greenhouse," Phil said almost like he was answering George's inward question, "It's where he keeps his flowers and his bees. I'm actually glad that you all claimed these houses so that you can be close to him."

"I'm surprised he's living out *here*," Antfrost commented, "Since he's a minor you check on him

right?"

"That's right," Phil smiled, "I wanted him to live a bit closer to us but he really liked that house when he saw it and it was hard to say no to him."

"Is.....is there any other house close to here?" Ranboo spoke up and George blinked, surprised because he'd forgotten all about the boy still being with them. He'd not said a single word after saying goodbye to Tubbo earlier. George frowned, he must still be overwhelmed.

Phil's face softened and he smiled again, "Yes actually...it's further down the road from here."

"I'll take that one then," Ranboo nodded almost shyly, "If that's okay..."

"That's fine," Phil grinned out and nodded again to the two guys with papers.

"Not to be impatient...." George spoke up hesitantly and wanted to flinch when everyone turned to look at him, "But, um, where do the clerics work at?"

"Oh, right," Phil laughed and put his hands on his hips, "We're close to there as well. We converted and built onto a home to make it into a big two-story building. It's become our hospital of sorts."

"Sounds smart," Dream said in a serious tone, "Most clerics just use small churches as their hospitals which I've never understood."

"Me neither," George and Bad said simultaneously before turning to look at each other in shock. Sapnap, Karl, and Skeppy laughed at them.

"That's because they don't have enough manpower to make anything bigger like we did," Phil hummed and George thought that made sense, "Anyways, follow me. We only have a few more places to see and then you can settle in your new homes."

George felt dead on his feet by the time the tour was over. He and Dream were back at their newly attained home but George felt ready to just pass out on their lawn and it wasn't even *dark* yet.

Phil showed them where the hospital was close enough to the training area which made sense and after that he showed them where the fletcher and other crafters do their work. Antfrost was ecstatic to find out that he'd be able to craft things and also make furniture there.

In any event, George was sure they'd just walked for hours. Well, maybe not. George sighed heavily and heard Dream chuckle at his side, "You okay? You look like a newborn fawn at this point."

"Don't make fun! We'd been sitting and riding for nearly three days. I guess my legs are just *betraying* me at this point," George groaned. He blinked when Dream let go of his hand and shifted at his side before outright yelping when Dream picked him up bridal style.

He got a strong sense of déjà vu from the time he picked George up like this in his home village when they first met. George blushed at the feeling of Dream's strong arms holding him so easily, "D-Dream! Put me down!"

"No," Dream replied simply and began walking towards the front door to their house, "Isn't it tradition to carry your lover to your front door or something? Like when you get a new home?"

George's blush intensified, confused, "What d-do you mean? That....that's for when you just got married right?!"

"Oh, well same thing really," Dream shrugged and George heard loud laughter in the distance that he just *knew* was from Sapnap and Quackity. They were checking out their respective homes as well as Karl. George sighed, hiding his face in his hands momentarily.

Dream opened their front door and walked in, closing it behind him with his foot and carefully placing George down. George looked around intently. Phil had warned them that all the vacant houses barely had any furniture but that didn't bother George.

The space before them was open and there was a small room with a door off to the right side close to a staircase leading to the second floor. Right beside that room was a kitchen-looking area with counters and a smoker. In the open area in front of them to the left there were only a couple of large windows and what looked like a fireplace pit.

"Seems homey enough," Dream commented as he walked forward to the door on the right, opened it, and then gasped, "Oh, George its a bathroom and it has a *shower*!"

George couldn't help but laugh at his excitement. It makes sense though, with how old and prosperous this village was, that there'd be a working shower. George was excited about that as well but not *nearly* as much as Dream.

"I'm glad that we already have a smoker too," George said eagerly as he glanced at the kitchen-like area. Above the smoker were several cabinets that could store food or crops, "I'm already excited about what we can do with this place."

"Right?!" Dream beamed behind his mask and George gasped when he threw himself at George in a hug, "Like it doesn't bother me that this place isn't really furnished. I prefer making or working for my own stuff anyways. What about you?"

"It's the same for me," George smiled at him, hugging him back and he thought Dream looked funny with how he was bent over George due to his height. He was just too damn *tall*, "Let's go look upstairs real quick."

"Yeah, I hope we have a bed," Dream grinned as he took George by the hand and led him up the stairs.

When they got there they were both surprised by how big the bedroom was. The only thing inside though was a king-sized bed with flimsy white sheets. It didn't look the best but it was better than nothing. To the left was another small room and George walked towards it.

He opened the door and was pleasantly surprised by the fact that they had a *second* bathroom. It was a bit bigger than the one downstairs but only slightly. This bathroom had a bathtub with what looked like a showerhead connected. George never saw anything like that before.

"Whoa...." Dream gasped, equally as stunned as he came in behind George, "This house is even better than I thought it was going to be. This is *crazy*!"

George glanced over at Dream and almost jolted when he noticed Dream shoved his mask up into his hair. His face was very expressive in his disbelief.

George smiled, "Since this village, if you can even call it that, has been here for a long time it's not that surprising that they have stuff like this."

Dream chuckled once, "I guess so....but *still*. This is like something out a fairytale! You know with the awesome stuff, this big land, and the castle?"

George's eyes widened and then he laughed, "A fairytale.....you're right!"

Dream grinned at him and they both shuffled out of the bathroom, looking around the bedroom together. George was almost lost in daydreaming again when he noticed Dream's face morph into a beam as he looked around, "We could build us some dressers to store spare clothes or maybe just build a closet right here? We can also build or buy a better bed eventually with more blankets and pillows! We could also...."

George giggled at his obvious excitement as he babbled on about possible plans for their new house, "Well, I don't mind any of those suggestions."

Dream leaned backwards until he sat on the bed. He glanced at George before grabbing his wrist and pulling him to the bed with him. George gasped and landed on the bed with an 'oof'. Dream laid down right beside him and grinned when George shot him a look, "I think we'll be happy here."

George's frown melted in the face of Dream's happiness. This place could be a pigpen or small hut and he'd *still* accept it if it made Dream this happy. George felt warmth bloom inside his chest and the emotions he felt almost sent a shiver down his spine.

"I think we will be too," George smiled warmly and Dream's grin widened before he sat up a little to lean over George. George's heart skipped a few beats at the sight of Dream leaning over him, maskless, with the natural light of the room complimenting his golden dirty-blond hair.

Dream interlaced both of their hands together, caging him in, and leaned down to press a kiss on George's lips. George felt himself blush and tried to reciprocate but he wasn't as good at this as Dream appeared to be. However, Dream seemed not to mind leading their kisses.

Dream shuffled as tried to move to deepen the kiss but his knee accidentally hit George's hip and George couldn't help but giggle against Dream's lips. Dream leaned back slightly and chuckled, "Don't laugh! What's wrong with you?"

"Can't help it," George grinned, wiggling his fingers in Dream's. Dream laughed a little louder but ducked down again. George closed his eyes on instinct, readying himself for another kiss but he gasped when Dream kissed his cheek instead.

"Expecting something George?" Dream teased, a handsome smirk on his face. George's face burned and he frowned.

"If you're gonna tease me then I *won't* kiss you," George said, annoyed and Dream laughed.

"Noooo, I'm sorry," Dream replied playfully and George shrieked when Dream ducked down to place quick kisses all over his face.

George laughed repeatedly and tried to push him away but couldn't. Dream was laughing in between kisses too. George's breath hitched when Dream placed a slow kiss on his jawline. That felt better than he thought.

Suddenly there was loud banging on their front door, causing both of them to jolt in shock. Dream leaned off George and frowned, "Who the hell?"

"Who do you think?" George scowled, a bit irritated that they'd have to get up again when he was so comfy. That and their time was just interrupted.

"Oh," Dream sighed and slowly got up off the bed. George followed him as they went downstairs and to the front door. Dream opened the door hastily with a frown.

Of course, Sapnap was there with a shit-eating grin on his face, "Yo! Didn't interrupt any love-

making did I?"

"You're so *dumb*!" George growled, blushing furiously.

"You didn't come here just to be annoying right?" Dream scowled and Sapnap laughed at their reactions.

"No, I promise," Sapnap said cheerfully, "My place is pretty nice and I was wondering how you liked yours?"

Dream crossed his arms, "It's nice. I like it a lot, especially since there's a lot of potential for improvement."

"I get that! I actually like that we'll get to decorate it how we want!" Sapnap grinned out, "But that's not the only reason I came. I wanted to go to the training area again and wanted you guys to come with me! I didn't want to go alone..."

"What about Karl and Quackity?" George asked curiously, raising an eyebrow. Sapnap scoffed.

"I wanna spend time with *you* guys!" Sapnap complained and Dream chuckled, "Besides they went to go look at the castle where they'll be working."

"Fine, I don't mind going to see where I'll be working," Dream shrugged and turned to George, "You wanna come too? You don't have to since I know you're tired..."

George smiled, "I'll go. Not really comfortable enough to just sit around here by myself."

Dream and Sapnap grinned before Sapnap cheered, "Awesome! Dream team on another mission!"

Dream looked startled at the term before laughing into a wheeze while George looked at Sapnap incredulously, "Dream team? Did you actually just come up with that?"

"Yup, just now," Sapnap chuckled and grabbed Dream's arm to give it a tug, "Let's go, *c'mon*!"

George rolled his eyes fondly while his boyfriend laughed his lungs out at their friend's expense. At least he remembered to pull down his mask.

It took them almost thirty minutes to find the training area again despite it being a *ten* minute walk from their house simply because Sapnap led them down the wrong path at first. George had a good laugh at Sapnap's expense for that one. When they arrived at the training area, it was still busy with warriors sparring and archers practicing.

He spotted a familiar figure overseeing the warriors sparring and Dream blinked when he noticed the same figure. They walked up and thankfully Dream did the greeting, "Hey! Purpled, right?"

Purpled blinked over at them, looking over them all before nodding his head, "Hello Dream, Sapnap, and.....George wasn't it?"

"That's right," George nodded, realizing this was the first time he was actually meeting Purpled face to face, "Nice to meet you."

Purpled smiled and nodded. He seemed to be the quieter type compared to most but at least he seemed polite. George couldn't imagine that he wouldn't get along with him, "What brings you all here?"

"We wanted to look at where we'll be working from now on!" Sapnap grinned out and Purpled hummed.

"Oh....yes. You two will report here starting tomorrow I believe," Purpled said seriously, "It won't be anything big since you just got here. You'll just be learning the ropes of what you will be doing."

"Sounds good to me," Dream shrugged and George admired that Dream was able to handle almost anything that came his way. Sapnap nodded in agreement with Dream, "Will I get to spar?"

Purpled chuckled, "Eager I see. Probably...it'll be good for the other village warriors to see how good you are. After all, Techno tells me he thinks you'll be someone big like him."

Dream, Sapnap, and George were all taken by surprise at that. Dream's eyes widened behind his mask and he cocked his head cutely, "Really? Well, that's nice of him to say..."

Purpled shrugged, "We all heard from the survivors and your friends how well you two fought your captors."

George shuffled uncomfortably at the reminder of how useless he was back then. He nearly jumped when Dream grabbed his hand like he knew what was going on in George's mind. Probably because he'd told Dream back then. Sapnap frowned.

"Well, we weren't really in the right mindset then...." Sapnap crossed his arms and glanced at George for a second before looking away. George frowned as well.

"Regardless, we were pretty impressed with what we heard," Purpled smiled eagerly, "I'm kind of excited to spar against you to see how skilled you are for myself."

Dream's eyes lit up instantly at the challenge, making George and Sapnap laugh, "Heck yeah! Maybe tomorrow!"

Purpled laughed at his eagerness, "Maybe...."

"Oh, hello again!"

They all turned and George's eyes widened in shock to see Eret walking towards them, his crown gleaming under the evening sun with a familiar figure behind him who looked just as shocked as George, "Awesamdude?!"

"George! Oh wow!" Awesamdude beamed and Sapnap looked at them in confusion while Dream frowned. Eret seemed taken by surprise.

"You already know them Sam? And you actually make them call you Awesamdude?" Eret tutted and Awesamdude laughed, rubbing the back of his head sheepishly.

"Yeah I know George and Dream there and they could call me Sam instead if they really wanted to. I don't really care," Sam shrugged and he glanced at Sapnap, "Hello....nice to meet you!"

"Hey," Sapnap rose an eyebrow, "Nice to meet you too...."

"I can't believe you're here! I heard we had newcomers but I definitely didn't think it was you guys!" Sam cheered and George nodded.

"It's really good to see you again!" George smiled and Sapnap glanced over to see Dream's frown. Sapnap almost laughed outright at the look on Dream's face.

"I met George and Dream with their friend on the road when they were looking for their other friends!" Sam explained to Eret and Purpled who looked so lost. Sam turned back to them, "So you found your loved ones then?!"

George couldn't help but laugh when Sapnap blinked, surprised and Dream nodded, almost embarrassed by the term 'loved one' when Sapnap was right there. Eret chuckled, "Well that's nice! I'm glad to hear that! Also, I didn't mean to eavesdrop but I heard what you were talking about before."

"Oh?" Purpled raised an eyebrow.

"Yes and I think Dream will probably become something like a second commander-in chief. Basically almost the same position as Techno except not being the main leader if that makes any sense," Eret grinned when Dream's eyes bugged out of his head. George's mouth fell open.

"I-I don't know....that seems too soon. I don't want to seem like I'm trying to take any power away from anyone," Dream shuffled, obviously embarrassed and a bit uncomfortable with the idea. George frowned and squeezed his hand.

Eret frowned as well, "Oh, you don't have to worry about. This'll actually be helping me and Techno out wonders. You have *no* idea. And it won't happen right away or anything. It'll obviously happen after you've been here a bit and gained trust with everyone. We don't want what happened with Schlatt to happen again."

Dream seemed a bit relieved at that and nodded while George and Sapnap shared a confused look at the mention of Schlatt, "I'll do my best to earn my keep here."

"Glad to hear that," Purpled grinned and he glanced at Sapnap, "I also talked with Puffy. She's thinking that after awhile she wants you to be a captain like her. You'll have your own squadron of warriors to command and you'll help her oversee the security of this place."

Sapnap's eyes widened, "Whoa, seriously?"

"Yes, everyone had nothing but good things to say about you," Purpled said seriously as Eret nodded in the background, "Everyone else that were prisoners mentioned how you helped them and led them time and time again. That's probably what impressed Puffy the most."

Sapnap turned so red that it shocked George. Dream wheezed like he was unable to help himself but his eyes were bright as he looked at his best friend. George was just happy that Dream and Sapnap are getting recognized for their good qualities. George smiled.

"I can't wait to hear the stories then!" Sam exclaimed with an impressed look on his face before his eyes glanced down at George and Dream's intertwined fingers. He rose an eyebrow and George couldn't help but blush.

Eret seemed to notice what Sam was looking at and grinned, "Oh and I wanted to offer my congratulations on your relationship. I heard from Techno."

"Does everyone have loose lips or something?" Dream joked and Sapnap laughed while Purpled looked surprised. Sam seemed just as taken off guard but he soon beamed.

"Aww, good for you guys!" He said happily and George smiled at him. Dream blinked like he wasn't expecting Sam to congratulate them, "That's great!"

"Thank you," George said politely and Sam nodded, grinning.

"Well, I was just passing through and I think I've taken enough of your time," Eret commented and smiled at them, "If you're ever concerned about anything you can mostly find me at the castle."

Dream and Sapnap nodded, "Okay."

"I'll leave as well. I have some supplies to pick up!" Sam grinned out, "It was so nice to see you and Dream again, George! Let's hang out sometime!"

"Yeah, let's do that," George chuckled and they all went silent as both males walked away chatting with each other. George glanced at Dream.

"I guess George and I will go back now," Dream spoke up after clearing his throat. Purpled nodded, "I'll see you tomorrow morning."

"Sounds good. Have a good night," Purpled waved them off and they both turned to Sapnap.

"I think I'm gonna walk around for a bit. Thanks for coming with me," Sapnap smirked, "I better leave you guys to be alone."

"*Finally*," Dream joked and Sapnap laughed, "See you tomorrow Sap."

"See ya! Use protection!" Sapnap grinned out and Dream pushed him away from them while George turned red and Sapnap's laugh became louder as he ran off. Dream shook his head and sighed.

"Stupid Sapnap," He muttered and George nodded, still embarrassed. Dream glanced down at him and smiled hesitantly, "Wanna head home?"

"Sure," George nodded, his feet and back aching, "I'm ready to sleep for a few years."

Dream laughed into a wheeze as he pulled them along the path that'll take them back home. Things became oddly peaceful as they walked to their home hand-in-hand. George briefly thought about how Dream and Sapnap would start working tomorrow. George made a mental note to go see Ponk first thing when he woke up in the morning. He wondered if Ponk had any medical books he could start studying.

"Dream! George!"

Dream pulled them to a stop and George blinked out of his thoughts to see Tubbo running towards them with a basket on his arm, looking out of breath. Dream frowned, "Tubbo? What's wrong?"

Tubbo came to a stop right in front of them and panted for breath, "O-Oh nothing...I heard from Phil about your new house and that you, Sapnap, Karl, and Quackity were gonna be living close to me now!"

"So I went by your new house to find you but you weren't there so I've been running around looking for you," Tubbo continued, catching his breath and smiling as he stood a little straighter, "I'm glad you'll be my new neighbors!"

"Same here," Dream grinned and George smiled at the small blonde boy. Tubbo suddenly took the basket off his arm and thrust it towards Dream and George. Dream blinked but took it from him, "What's this?"

"This is kind of like a welcome and thank you present all in one!" Tubbo said cheerfully as Dream unwrapped the blanket covering the basket while George leaned over to peek at the contents with him. They saw a full jar of honey and two small brown bags.

Tubbo leaned forward on the tips of his toes and explained, "In one bag is some sugar and in the other is some salt. I also included some of my honey because I have a lot! I figured with all that you'd have some stuff to add to any food you make in your new home!"

George almost teared up at the good gesture and he flinched in surprise when Dream pulled Tubbo in a hug, "Aww, Tubbo thank you."

Tubbo smiled in a pleased way as he hugged Dream back, "No problem! You were really nice to me the other day and you also helped everyone escape from those pillagers so I figured I could do this for you both!"

"You're so sweet Tubbo," George smiled warmly at the boy when he and Dream parted from their hug. He hesitantly opened his own arms for a hug, feeling awkward but Tubbo simply beamed and hugged George as well, "Since we're neighbors you're welcome to come over if you ever need anything or just need to get away..."

Tubbo seemed taken off guard by that but beamed all the same as they parted, "Thank you George!"

"Anytime," George said easily.

"I better go now! I wanted to check up on Ranboo and I still wanted to give some welcome gifts to the others too!" Tubbo exclaimed as shuffled like he couldn't keep still. Dream chuckled at him and ruffled his hair, startling him.

"Well you do that. I'm sure Ranboo will be thrilled," Dream grinned out and Tubbo nodded, "We'll see you later."

Tubbo beamed again, "Yeah, bye guys!"

They both watched him leave before resuming the walk to their home. George turned to Dream and grabbed his hand, smiling, "I'm *so* glad we came here."

Dream smiled warmly at him and pulled him into his side, "Me too."

So I changed my mind about Awesamdude's name. I had them saying it literally but it seemed like a mouth full and other stories I've read with him in it they just call him "Sam" so I think I'll do the same unless everyone gets too confused!

Also, I'm living for all the fluffy moments and I hope you are enjoying them too. I know there hasn't been much angst and some of you are anxious about that....guess we'll just see how things go for them! ☺

Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

It's just another peaceful day for Dream and his friends...until it suddenly isn't.

Chapter Notes

Hello guys! Hope you're all doing well. I'm trying to deal with so much and to top it all off my cat got bit by a spider. ☹️ She's fine now I believe and I'm keeping an eye on her recovery but my God it's one thing after the other it feels like.

Anyways! Thank you all for your continued support! It's still crazy to me how many bookmarks and kudos I see that seem to steadily rise each week! Thank you so much!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The two weeks that passed were some of the best weeks Dream thought he'd ever had. It felt nice to have some part of his life structured instead of the unpredictable traveling life he'd had before. Now he woke up everyday ready to work for his lifestyle and he was surrounded by more friends he ever thought he'd have. It was also just a bonus to be waking up next to George every morning and spending time with him everyday.

If their expressions and attitudes were anything to go by, Dream knew that his friends were feeling just as content as he was. Well, all except Sapnap. While he was really excited about living in the village and having a new job he liked, he still showed a tense daydreaming expression on his face from time to time.

It only started to decrease recently when Techno came to find them at the training grounds one day to inform them that he was still keeping his promise about finding the other pillager group in the overworld. He sent letters to other villages to try and get information and to warn them. Sapnap seemed even more relieved than him to hear it.

"Dream!"

Dream glanced over his shoulder to see Purpled rushing towards him. It was weird how this guy was, at first, so quiet and reserved around him. Now he seemed to open up more around Dream though he doesn't really know why. George told him once before that he was easy to open up to but he still didn't get the reason. He wasn't particularly as nice as the others.

"Hey Purpled. What's up?" Dream greeted when the other finally reached him from where he was leaving the training grounds.

"You did well again today. You have another batch of people that want to spar with you tomorrow," Purpled laughed out and Dream chuckled, amused.

He'd gained somewhat of an amazing reputation the past two weeks because of the way he sparred against others. He was almost embarrassed by the constant whispering or string of compliments about him and the astounded stares that went his way. He'd yet to lose a spar but Purpled told him Techno would probably be the only one to beat him. He was very interested to find out.

"Well thanks," Dream grinned at Purpled, "Looking forward to it."

"Yeah," Purpled nodded, smiling, "So are you headed to pick up George?"

"Yup," Dream affirmed, looking off in the direction of the hospital where George worked. Purpled slapped his back hard and laughed when Dream glared at him for it.

"Go get 'em, lover boy," Purpled teased and Dream rolled his eyes, "I'll see you later."

"See ya," Dream replied before jogging off. As he neared the hospital his eyes caught on some white flowers growing in the grass by the dirt path. Dream grinned and plucked one before entering the hospital.

George was sitting at a desk he shared with Ponk, writing in a small little book when Dream came close enough to be noticed. Ponk was talking to a couple of sick-looking people lying on cots across the room.

"George," Dream called softly, not wanting to disturb the others on the other side of the room. George peered over at him and Dream's heart swelled in his chest when George's eyes lit up at the sight of him, "Whatcha doing?"

George smiled when Dream stopped right next to him and peeked at the small notebook filled with what looked like a list, "I'm writing down materials we used up so far so that we know what to replace."

"Nice," Dream hummed and then looked at George's face, "I have something for you."

"Really? What is it?" George rose an eyebrow but smiled excitedly. Dream smiled back and placed the white flower he plucked earlier into George's hair, "That's....a flower?"

"Yup!" Dream laughed a little when George tilted his head, "You're so pretty, George!"

George's eyes widened and he blushed as he protested, "D-Dream! Guys don't like to be called pretty!"

"Who says?" Dream smirked as he put his hand on George's face and stroked his cheek with his thumb. George still looked embarrassed which was so cute, "Guys can be pretty Georgie, but if you don't like that then I'll just say you're beautiful."

George gave him a look that bordered on incredulous and embarrassment, "Dream! Its....it's not that it bothers- you...you know what? You're too much!"

Dream wheezed until George pouted his lips ever so slightly in the way he did that always made Dream want to kiss him. He used the hand still touching George's face to tilt his chin up and press a kiss on his mouth. George gasped at the unexpected kiss but soon relaxed into it.

Someone cleared their throat and they both jumped, looking over to see an embarrassed Ponk and two embarrassed sick people staring at them. Even Dream blushed and was once again thankful for his mask. George looked ready to faint with how red he turned.

"George, good work today. Why don't you take *that* outside?" Ponk smiled, his second-hand embarrassment leaving. George simply nodded without a word, took Dream's hand, and practically dragged him out of the hospital.

Dream turned to George once they were safely away. He grinned toothily, "Well that was embarrassing...."

George looked at him incredulously, "You didn't act embarrassed at *all*!"

"I was though," Dream laughed at his expression, giving their intertwined fingers a squeeze. George sighed, rubbing his own face with his other hand.

"If you say so..." He trailed off and Dream just continued grinning down at him.

"How were things today?" Dream asked considerately and George looked up at him with a small smile.

"It went better than yesterday," George laughed softly. George had been learning all he could about being a cleric and about medicine through books that both Ponk and Bad gave him. He'd been having trouble adjusting to actually treating people. Dream remembered hearing from George about how he'd dropped a valuable vial of medicine and how he'd felt terrible about it but Ponk just laughed it off.

To Dream it just seemed like George was trying to work himself too hard. However, he understood his drive and wanted to be a supporting boyfriend to him.

"That's great George," Dream said happily, adjusting his face mask when someone walked by and stared at it.

George seemed to notice that and spoke up, "I actually need to get another book from Bad....do you wanna come with me?"

Dream considered that but shook his head, "No, I'm good. I actually need to go see Antfrost about something. I just wanted to see your face for a minute."

Like he thought, George's eyes widened at that and he blushed a little as he looked away. Dream snickered and pulled him in for a hug. George gasped but quickly leaned in to return the hug. Dream leaned down close to George's ear and smirked, "When will you get used to me, Georgie?"

George literally froze as if he malfunctioned for a second before he turned red and tried to push Dream away, "*Dream!*"

Dream held on tight and leaned his head away so that he wasn't wheezing right in George's ear. He almost felt bad for teasing him but at the same time he just enjoyed George's reaction too much. Lately, Dream had been doing more forward things like this to test George's limit.

"You're so....! Why are you....?!" George stammered, giving up on trying to push himself out of the hug. Dream finished laughing and rested his head on George's shoulder.

"Sorry, I couldn't help myself," Dream said and George went quiet, "You're just so funny sometimes George."

George seemed to calm down some and he scoffed, "Sometimes?"

Dream laughed a little and George continued, lowly muttering, "I'll get used to things like that you're just *impatient*."

Dream chuckled, "You're right....sorry, not sorry."

George laughed, shaking his head a little, "You're so stupid. I need to go and apparently you do too."

"You're right again," Dream sighed, reluctantly letting George go. Right before he completely

unwound his arms though, George gripped his shirt and pulled him close to press a kiss on the side of his throat. Dream's breath halted for a moment.

Just as quickly as he'd kissed Dream's throat, he was pushing away with pink cheeks and said, "See you later then...."

He dashed off before Dream even finished processing what the hell just happened. George could be so strange or maybe that was supposed to be payback for messing with him? Dream touched his throat; it almost felt like he could still feel George's lips there. He definitely wanted that to happen again...hopefully...

Dream shook himself out of his frozen state when someone else passed him looking at him oddly. He ignored that and quietly took the path he remembered would take him to where Antfrost worked.

Dream spotted Antfrost inside the huge cabin-looking building Phil had shown them on tour. He was carving something made of wood but it had yet to take a definite shape so Dream wasn't sure what he was making.

He stepped through the door and cleared his throat to get Ant's attention before greeting him so he didn't scare the daylights out of him when he spoke, "Hey Ant!"

Ant still jumped slightly, having been completely focused, but he recovered quickly and smiled when he saw a familiar face, "Oh, hey Dream."

"Sorry to bother you when I know you're busy," Dream began sheepishly. Ant was seriously busy, that wasn't a polite speech. Antfrost was making some serious money helping all the newcomers acquire furniture that he made. Dream knew he already had multiple orders he has yet to complete. However Ant never looked burdened by the fact.

Dream and George used their first two weeks wages buying things around the shops including furniture orders from Antfrost as well. Soon they'd have a couch and a new bedframe. Dream couldn't wait. There was something so satisfying about being able to purchase their own things.

"Dream?"

Dream blinked out of his thoughtful daze to see Antfrost looking at him slightly concerned. He realized he completely spaced out on his friend, "Oh, sorry. I was just lost in thought. Did you say something?"

Ant laughed a little, "Well I was asking you if you were here about George's present? I finished altering it like you asked."

"Thanks!" Dream exclaimed, perking up. Ant smiled as he walked around a wood desk area and ducked down for a moment before standing again with George's present in his hand. Ant handed it over for him to inspect.

The present itself was a simple-looking pair of glasses that Dream worked hard to carve out of skeleton bones. It wasn't perfect and the outer shape of the black glass lenses were a bit bigger than normal, but Dream actually liked that. He imagined the huge circle glasses on George and thought it'd make him appear even cuter and smaller.

"It's a bit odd but very creative that you used skeleton bones," Ant commented while Dream turned the glasses around in his hands, "Plastic would ruin faster than bone would."

Dream smiled as he nodded, inspecting Ant's part of the work. Ant helped him clean up what he carved and then applied a layer of coating on it to further smooth it out. To an untrained eye it probably looked plastic, "Thanks. I thought so too."

After Dream finished inspecting it he handed Ant a few emeralds to pay for it. Ant tried not to take it as this had been a favor Dream asked of him and not a job but Dream simply left the emeralds on the desk, forcing his friend to take the money.

"I forgot how *stubborn* you can be," Ant sighed but then smiled, "I'm glad you like it. When are you going to give it to George if I may ask?"

"I kinda wanna make it special. Like take him on a actual date soon," Dream murmured, fidgeting with his fingers nervously, "We've hung out by ourselves before but...."

"I get it. That's a great idea actually," Ant said cheerfully, "Make the most out of it before you give it to him!"

"Yeah. Thanks again, Ant. It would have taken me forever to get it this good by myself," Dream laughed out and Ant laughed with him.

Dream chatted with Ant for a few more minutes before stuffing George's present in the small leather bag he'd gotten just for this reason. He decided to walk home so that he could put it away, however, he got distracted when he passed by a market stall and saw Philza.

Phil seemed to notice him at the exact moment Dream noticed Phil and smiled at him, "Hello Dream. What are you up to, mate?"

"Not much," Dream shrugged and eyed the large wrapped package Phil had in his hands. Phil caught him looking and grinned.

"It's cake. I promised Wilbur and Tommy that I'd get some today," He said casually but there was fondness in his eyes, "Been awhile since I had cake anyways."

"Sounds nice," Dream nodded, his mouth quirking into a smile, "Techno doesn't eat cake with you guys?"

Phil looked confused for a moment before his eyes lit up in understanding, "Oh, he does. Techno never asks me for anything; not even when I want him too. He'll probably end up gorging on cake with us if he's not busy tonight."

"Ah, I see. I was just curious. Techno acts so different with you than Wilbur or Tommy do," Dream replied, shuffling his feet as he felt the familiar itch to not just stand still.

Phil's face went blank and he shrugged, "Techno was already able to take care of himself when I legally adopted him so I don't know if he considers me a father the way Tommy and Wilbur do."

Despite his face being blank, Dream immediately knew that he had hit a sore note with Phil. Not in a mean way but in the way that Phil truly didn't know what Techno really thought of him and it bothered Phil. Dream regretted ever bringing it up.

"I'm sure he considers you a father too, Phil," Dream shrugged, trying to appear casual and comforting. It wasn't his forte though despite what others thought, "I mean, I can't speak for him, but from what I heard you saved him, adopted him, and have been by his side since. It's not like that means nothing to him."

Phil blinked at Dream before smiling and Dream felt relieved, "Thank you for saying that, mate. I know Techno respects me a lot but sometimes it's really hard to know what that boy is thinking."

Dream nodded in agreement, "Yeah, I get it. It is kind of hard to read him and he always sounds either monotone or sarcastic."

Phil laughed, "Right?"

"Excuse me..."

Philza and Dream both turned in unison to see a village warrior standing there with a blank expression on his face. Dream didn't recognize him but that was normal as he hadn't met all of the other warriors yet. And it was definitely a warrior because he was wearing the usual iron armor set all warriors wore. Instead of looking at Phil, the warrior was looking towards Dream.

"Uh, yes?" Dream answered and the warrior glanced at Phil before looking back at Dream. Why

did he seem hesitant? Dream wasn't that scary looking...

"Technoblade ordered me to tell you he needs you to grab some spare weapons from the storage building by the castle and bring it to the training area," The warrior explained and Dream rose an eyebrow.

"Alright," Dream answered, a bit confused by the sudden request as Techno had yet to really ask anything of him. He'd done favors for Purpled and even Puffy the couple of times he saw her but not for Techno as he'd not been asked. The last time he saw Techno was when the other male was telling him that he and George were in the clear and definitely passed the two-week trial of living there. That meant they could live there permanently.

He was lost in his thoughts so the warrior awkwardly retreated and left the pair alone again. Dream flicked his eyes at Phil to see Phil eyeing the warrior as he left. Phil glanced over at Dream and smiled. Whatever seemed to bother him was gone, "That was weird, mate. I'll do that task for you though because I need to get something from that storage building anyways."

Dream was relieved because that saved him one hell of a walk, "Thanks. Are you sure though?"

"Yeah," Phil chuckled at his obvious relief, "I need to stop by there and another place before I go home so it's no biggie. Plus I know you want to get back to George soon, mate."

"Well I appreciate it," Dream grinned eagerly and Phil smiled patting his back before walking off. Dream watched him leave for a moment. Phil reminded him a lot of his own late father.

He shook his head before he could get sad thinking of his family that was gone. Dream hesitated before walking home, making sure there was nothing else he wanted to do before going. He figured George was done getting that book by now and was heading home as well.

Eager to see his boyfriend again, even though it'd only been little more than half an hour, Dream hurried down the path that would begin taking him home.

Dream was only a third of the way home when he was passing close to the smithing place. It was there that he surprisingly found George and he was with Skeppy, Bad, and Techno around the forge in the back.

Skeppy saw him first and smiled as he greeted him, "Dream! What's up?"

"Was about to head home to look for George," Dream said as he walked up to the group. George glanced over at him in surprise before smiling when Dream immediately walked right up to his side.

"I was going to go home but Bad talked me into walking here with him," George murmured and Bad shrugged.

"I didn't want to go alone," He said and Dream chuckled, "How are you Dream? I haven't seen you in a couple of days."

He was pouting as he said that and Dream laughed further at the genuine disappointment on his face. Dream shook his head, "Sorry. I'll come around more often."

"You better," Bad replied teasingly and Skeppy laughed as he walked around the forge to the chair Bad was sitting in. Techno was merely leaning across a post, seemingly disinterested in what was happening around him.

"What are you doing here?" Dream decided to ask him.

"I came to check on Skeppy's work. I ordered another set of iron armor," Techno answered in a simple tone. He glanced at Dream and actually smirked, "Word on the street is you haven't lost a spar yet and that I should challenge you soon."

Dream immediately smirked in return at the challenge to his tone, "That's right."

"Maybe sometime this week," Techno said nonchalantly.

"You're both crazy," George sighed and Dream laughed, wrapping his arms around him to hug him from behind. George didn't even react this time which was both nice and disappointing.

"I wouldn't be surprised if the whole town comes down to see it," Skeppy laughed loudly and even Bad giggled, "You should charge people to see it."

"Good idea," Techno's face lit up at the idea of making money which made George and Dream join Skeppy and Bad in laughing.

They continued talking for several long minutes while Skeppy got back to work. It wasn't until later that Dream remembered Techno's request of him. He glanced at Techno and spoke up, "Oh by the way, Techno....that thing you asked me to do is going to be done by Phil instead of me."

He was surprised when Techno looked at him with visible confusion. Dream rose an eyebrow behind his mask as Techno replied to him, "What are you talking about?"

"You...." Dream paused, thoroughly confused and George turned to watch them with interest, "Didn't you ask a warrior to tell me to take some weapons from storage to the training area?"

Techno's face blanched, "No. I never did that."

Dream felt his confusion grow in his chest as Bad and George shared a confused look of their own. Did the warrior just hear wrong? Maybe they were tricked or played a prank on by someone else.

"Who told you that....?" Techno asked warily, his eyebrow's knitting behind his mask.

No sooner did he ask that question did a loud boom go off in the distance, it being so impactful that the ground shook underneath their feet from where they were. Dream heard Bad gasp and whirled around to see fire and smoke in the distance.

"Are we being attacked?!" Skeppy demanded as he all but *jumped* over the forge to be by Bad's side. Techno ran forward, alarm and shock on his face.

"Where was that?!" George exclaimed, shuffling closer to Dream nervously. Other people around stopped and stared at the distant smoke in shock.

Techno growled out, "That's the direction of the back of the castle and the storage buildings but no one's ever dared attack this place in years."

A physical jolt of panic and realization surged through Dream and he whirled towards Techno, startling the pig-masked male, "That's where Phil went!"

Dream never saw Techno so distressed before, watching as the other male's face drained of color and his eyes widened while his mouth fell open. Techno took off without another word.

Dream looked towards George and the others, "Let's go, they might need help!"

Bad nodded seriously while Skeppy glared in the distance and George looked worried. They wasted no time in running after Techno, practically running in his shadows by the time they caught up to him.

As they ran Dream noticed many people warily staying clear of the area while some warriors were rushing towards that area like they were. Dream hoped Phil was okay and that no one was hurt. What even happened?

The fire had grown by the time they got to the place the storage building was at. Techno froze in horror at the scene of two of their storage buildings on fire with one of the almost completely destroyed. The fire itself seemed so loud and smoke was filling the whole area.

Dream noticed warriors hesitant and running around helping other villagers away from the area. He startled when George grabbed his sleeve, looking horrified.

Techno turned immediately, barking orders, "Form a barrier and keep people back just in case something else happens."

Dream didn't even notice Puffy was in the area until Techno started rushing for the crushed storage building and she screamed, "Techno what are you *doing*?!"

Bad gasped as Techno disappeared in the crushed, flaming building, "Oh my God, Phil's not in there is he?"

"I hope not," Skeppy frowned, rubbing Bad's arms from behind.

"What happened?!"

Dream turned to see Wilbur running into the area with Tommy, Tubbo, and Ponk in tow. Wilbur froze when he saw the flaming building and Puffy immediately turned to him, "I don't know but Techno just ran in there!"

Wilbur paled and Tommy gasped, his eyes widening, "What?! Why?!"

"Phil might be in there," Dream told them softly and they stood stunned in place. Ponk's eyes widened and he immediately reached for the huge bag across his shoulder.

"Any injured?" He asked seriously and Dream shrugged quietly.

"I don't think so," George answered instead of him as he looked around, still clutching onto Dream, "Shouldn't somebody help Techno?"

"We'd just be in the way," Tubbo muttered worriedly, shuffling around on his feet, "And it's dangerous."

"Yeah the building could collapse more," Puffy frowned worriedly, "Phil's in there?"

"That's where he was heading before...." Dream explained and startled when Wilbur yelled in a frustrated manner into the air. This startled almost everyone.

"Wil...?" Tommy spoke hesitantly, reaching a hand to his older brother.

"How did this even *happen*?!" Wilbur growled out.

"I don't know but let's focus on how we can put the fires out," Skeppy spoke up and they looked at him.

Puffy nodded and immediately began ordering some of the warriors to help her. Dream and Skeppy both helped her organize people to gather water from nearby wells to try and put out the fires.

"Guys!"

Dream and George both turned to see Sapnap, Karl, and Quackity running up to them. Sapnap seemed relieved when he saw Dream and George there but that melted away in the face of the fires.

"Oh my God, Techno!" Quackity shrieked and Dream's heart hammered in his chest when he whirled around to see Techno running out of the collapsed burning building with Phil's body on his shoulder.

Tommy and Wilbur gasped, running forward immediately, "Dad!"

"Ponk, I need you here now!" Techno demanded as he laid Phil on the grass safely away from the burning buildings.

Ponk was immediately there and Dream urged George to get closer too, his heart in his throat. Phil had several severe-looking burns on his arms, one on his side wrapping around to his back, and a final one up the side of his right leg.

Tubbo rubbed Tommy's back when the taller boy leaned away looking green. George spoke up shakily, "Ponk, he seemed to inhale a lot of smoke."

Ponk nodded, frowning with worry, "The burns I can successfully treat. The smoke inhalation will go away with time but I can supply fresh oxygen to help him breathe."

"So he'll be fine?" Wilbur asked at once and Ponk nodded warily.

"He'll be in some pain and he'll have a long recovery period but I can keep him in my hospital for awhile and try to keep him from feeling too much pain," Ponk said aloud as he continued to investigate the small cuts on Phil.

"Are you okay Techno?" Puffy asked hesitantly as he glanced at him. He hadn't said a word but the other male was practically shaking in rage.

"I'm fine," He bit out and Puffy nodded, gulping. Techno seemed to have a couple of light burns and was coughing lightly but that was it.

George was helping Ponk with emergency treatment and gasped, "Ponk...his wrist. I think it's broken...."

Ponk's eyes widened and he turned to Phil's wrist, "Oh....you're right. That's easily fixable as well. I'll be needing your help treating him George."

Dream looked at him and rubbing his back when George tensed but nodded seriously, "I'll do my best."

"How did this happen?" Sapnap asked as he warily watched Techno and Wilbur silently fume with a deadly rage while Tommy looked so sick he might throw up any second.

"With the way that building looks in particular I'd say it was an explosive," Bad spoke up seriously and Techno immediately looked at him.

"An explosive?"

"Were there explosives in the storage building?" Bad questioned and Techno shook his head, "It's weird for a random fire to start and if it was *just* a fire then the building wouldn't have collapsed like that so quickly. Plus there is the boom we heard earlier."

"Right...." Wilbur nodded, his eyes widening like he just remembered that.

"So someone threw an explosive in or at the building?" Puffy demanded, looking incredulous, "Who would even dare?"

Dream's eyes widened in realization at the same time Sapnap inhaled sharply, "No....you're *joking*!"

"Sapnap?" Karl asked worriedly, touching Sapnap's shoulder.

Sapnap didn't answer him but hurriedly got closer to the buildings, looking around like he was looking for something in particular. Dream rose an eyebrow, confused by his actions, "Sapnap?"

"What are you looking for?" Techno asked calmly, though his eyes betrayed that he was still seconds away from exploding and hurting someone.

Sapnap went closer to the other burning building and George shared a confused look with Dream until Sapnap froze, his eyes widening, "Oh, you're fucking *kidding* me!"

"What?!" Tubbo exclaimed, looking worried while Tommy simply looked over in that direction.

Sapnap's lips curled in disgust and rage, "It was *them*! Those fucking pillagers!"

Dream tensed as George and some of the others gasped. Skeppy's eyes widened, "How do you know? What did you find?"

They walked closer to where Sapnap was and Dream sucked in a breath when he saw it. Behind the other burning building, on the wall of obsidian, was a red painted spiky-crescent shaped symbol; it was there in the color of blood as if to mock them.

"They found us," Dream whispered in shock as Techno's hands curled into fists. George shuffled even closer to Dream, practically in his arms as he paled. Karl and Quackity looked understandably panicked.

"But even so why would they do this? To get our attention and send a message?" Wilbur growled out, looking over his shoulder at where Ponk was still giving Phil emergency treatment.

That's when another realization hit Dream, "I was supposed to be in that building..."

Everyone turned to him in surprise and confusion. George tensed, looking up at him with brows drawn. Techno blinked, "Wait, you mean earlier....?"

Dream nodded his head quickly, "This warrior told me you requested me to go here to get weapons and take them to the training area. Phil offered to do it for me instead since he said he needed something here....I was supposed to be here not him."

Tommy's eyes grew large, "So they meant to try and kill *you*? Was this a revenge thing?"

"But why would they dare do this when they'd be outnumbered?" Puffy scowled, glaring at the symbol on the obsidian wall, "Well we don't know how many there are in the overworld but we at least outnumber them in terms of talent."

Dream and Techno shared a look and Techno said simply, "No matter their intentions, they've clearly declared war and it looks like they want Dream dead in particular."

"I wonder if those in the nether survived after all...." Karl murmured as he bit his lip and Sapnap tensed up, glaring at nothing in particular.

"I guess that's possible if they were found in time," Quackity replied, licking his lips, "What do we

do?"

"For now, treat Phil," Techno growled, already turning back to rush back to Phil, "Wilbur, Tommy, help me carry him to the hospital."

"Yeah," Wilbur replied instantly while Tommy nodded.

"The rest of us will help put out the fire before it spreads," Dream spoke up and Techno nodded seriously at him, gratitude briefly flashing through his eyes before they turned and rushed towards Ponk and Phil.

"Sapnap....?" Dream heard George say worriedly and he turned again to see Sapnap digging his fingernails in his palms as he clenched his fists so hard that blood was beginning to form in his palms.

"They aren't doing this again," Sapnap snarled, "I'll be damned if they ruin my peace for a *second* time. And they tried to kill Dream again? I swear to God I've never been this angry....not even in the nether!"

Dream and George's eyes widened while Karl and Quackity backed away from him a little, looking just as shocked. Dream frowned in understanding and grabbed Sapnap's wrist, "Hey, save some of that pent up rage for when we face the pillagers, huh?"

Sapnap scowled at him, still tense, "We need to find that warrior that you said spoke to you earlier."

Dream's eye widened in realization, "Yeah but I'm not sure if he's still around."

"Could you identify him if you saw him again?" Puffy asked curiously and Dream nodded immediately, "Alright. Let me deal with the fire situation. You and Sapnap can go looking for that guy since we'll want to question him when we find him."

"Okay," Sapnap nodded, looking calmer now that he had something to do.

"I'll go back and help Ponk," George spoke up seriously and Dream looked down at him. George frowned worriedly up at him, "You'll be careful right? Don't do anything stupid....*either* of you!"

Dream chuckled despite the situation, "I won't do anything stupid, just for you Georgie! So give me a kiss as a reward when I find this guy."

George blinked, surprised by the sudden request before rolling his eyes, "Okay, fine. But you have

to capture him."

"Done!" Dream smirked widely and turned to an amused Sapnap, "Let's hurry!"

"Alright!" Sapnap grinned eagerly and they both raced off to the last place Dream saw that random warrior. He hoped he could catch the guy...and not just for George's kiss.

In all honesty, Dream was still reeling that the pillagers even dared to attack Techno's place. I guess they weren't scared of the possible retaliation. Those pillagers made a mistake attacking their new home and hurting Phil.

And Dream was going to make sure every single last one of those pillagers paid for trying to disturb his and his friends' peace.

Chapter End Notes

So yeah...that happened....poor Philza!
pillagers. 😊

Techno's about to whoop ass on some

You'll learn more about the attack in further chapters so don't worry if you're confused!
If you are confused about anything else then be sure to let me know in the comments
below and I'll answer you!

As always, any feedback is appreciated! 😊

Chapter 24

Chapter Summary

More chaos ensues but this time it results in solid leads. Dream eventually gets to spend more time with George without all the chaos. A new character is introduced.

Chapter Notes

Hi guys! I was really excited for this chapter for a couple of reasons! Also, my cat is recovering nicely so thank you all that wished her well!
thank you all for your comments on last chapter!

Important Note!: There is some gore described in the chapter, so just a warning for those who don't like that sort of thing!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream raced across several paths in the village, masterfully maneuvering around other villagers out and about. Dream was impressed that Sapnap kept up with him, slightly off to the side, until he remembered that Sapnap was always pretty athletic which is how they became friends as children in the first place.

"You're sure you saw the guy in iron armor?" Sapnap questioned for the fourteenth time since they've started running around.

"I'm sure," Dream sighed out, scanning his surroundings carefully, "He was wearing exactly what most of the other warriors wear."

"Any other distinguishing things about this dude?" Sapnap huffed, impatient. Dream hummed as they slowed the pace of their running to carefully look around.

"He's got brown hair I think but it's lighter than George's. His skin is darker than George's too, almost a light tan I believe. He's about George's height," Dream explained and then slowed to a halt when Sapnap himself abruptly stopped, looking at Dream with both shock and incredulousness, "What?"

"You literally just...." Sapnap began, stopping to laugh almost hysterically as if they weren't trying to find someone that tried to murder Dream earlier, "Bro, you're so obsessed with George!"

Dream spluttered, caught off guard, "What?! Why the hell would you say that?!"

"Literally *everything* you said about this guy was a comparison to George's appearance," Sapnap laughed out, his eyes almost watering. Dream paused, thinking it over before his eyes went wide in realization. Sapnap laughed louder seeing his expression and Dream blushed slightly, growling.

"Oh, shut up! It was just an easy comparison to make!" Dream growled out and Sapnap said nothing, still laughing, "Just...c'mon!"

Sapnap followed him with dying laughter as Dream took off. They'd already retraced where Dream saw the guy last and headed in the direction where Dream remembered him walking off. However, the only iron-wearing warriors they came across didn't fit Dream's description.

Dream was getting angsty. What if the guy really *did* get away? What if he'd already left the village because he knew Dream would make the connection? Are they just wasting time looking for him?

"Dream," Sapnap gasped out, seemingly calmed down from his earlier fit of laughter. Dream glanced at him and Sapnap pointed towards a gate on the other side of the village that lead outside the village walls.

Dream noticed that there were at least four village warriors stationed there and they looked to be arguing, or at least talking heatedly, to someone else in iron armor that looked to be trying to leave. Dream's heart began racing.

"Let's go," He declared to Sapnap, immediately rushing towards the group with Sapnap trailing after him. He recognized a couple of warriors when he got closer as random warriors he'd sparred against a couple of times in the past.

They recognized him as well as he got closer and Dream frowned at the person they were trying to hold back, "What's going on?"

"This guy says he needs to leave," One warrior told him immediately, which Dream found a bit amusing.

"With what happened at the storage area earlier we aren't letting anyone leave until it's been properly investigated," Another warrior added and Dream nodded. That was smart, especially since they believe it to be a result of foul play.

Sapnap turned his eyes to the tense individual that refused to meet their eyes. He was just as tall as Dream claimed the suspect was but he didn't want to jump to conclusions, "Why are you trying to leave right after something like this happened? It's suspicious."

The man tensed further and Dream frowned, trying to get a closer look at the man to see if he

seemed like the one from earlier. Plus if he heard him speak that would pretty much confirm it.

Dream gasped when the man made a desperate break for the gate, bulldozing past Sapnap and a random warrior as he did so. Dream immediately tackled the man to the ground with relative ease and pinned him to the ground by his shoulders.

This put the man in better view for Dream. It seemed like the guy from before. He had the right shaved brown hair, light tanned skin, and he was the right height and build. Dream then noticed the man had hazel eyes and the guy's facial features made him look younger than Dream himself. He looked around Tubbo's age which made him almost hesitate.

"Let me go!" The man suddenly shouted, looking panicked, his hazel eyes large and beseeching as they looked at Dream's mask, "I gotta go! *Please!*"

Hearing his voice confirmed it for him, Dream scowled and turned to look at Sapnap and the other warriors, "He's definitely the one; the one that tried to set me up earlier."

Sapnap tensed, looking angry and the other warriors looked conflicted. One spoke up hesitantly, "You know where the prison is, right?"

"Yup," Dream nodded, pinning the man down further when he struggled against Dream. The prison was a large building further away from the rest of the village and Techno showed him it himself since they weren't shown on tour.

"Okay good," The same village warrior sighed in relief, "You both can take him there then. Meanwhile we'll continue to guard the gates until told otherwise."

"Sounds good to me," Sapnap shrugged and he glanced down at the man Dream was pinning to see he was growing more distressed.

"No, please! You *have* to let me go!" He cried out as Dream ignored him and forced him to stand. He looked ready to fight Dream so Sapnap stepped forward and forcefully grabbed his other arm, "Please! You don't understand!"

Dream and Sapnap continued to ignore his pleas as they dragged him down the path that would take them towards the prison. They also ignored the bewildered and wary stares of villagers they passed.

The man continued to plead for his release and Dream almost paused when the man cried out, "Please! I have to make sure they kept their promise!"

While Dream didn't actually pause, Sapnap completely froze, looking over at the man with anger

building in his gaze. Dream felt a bit wary. Sapnap never used to get angry. He was always a chill guy and it took a lot for him to get truly mad and when he was, he was force to be reckoned with.

"Why would you ever work with those heartless assholes?" Sapnap demanded through gritted teeth and the man seemed to freeze at the sudden hostile attention, "What kind of promise would make you willing to *kill* a person?"

The man's eyes teared up slightly and he looked ashamed, hanging his head in a way that made him look even younger. Dream felt uncomfortable for some reason. The man whimpered, "They promised they wouldn't follow through on their threat to kill everyone in my village, including my parents, if I helped them kill the smiley-faced guy that lived here."

Sapnap's eyes widened, losing their hostility as he and Dream exchanged a surprised look. Dream frowned, "They threatened to kill your entire village?"

The man hesitated, "I come here to trade with this village as a representative of *my* village, so I know the place well. They....they just came one day and seemed to know that somehow. They threatened me. They said if I didn't lure you to the storage building where they'd plant a bomb to kill you then they'd kill *everyone* in the village including my parents and abduct the young people."

Sapnap felt anger building in him again, "That at least sounds like something they'd do. They've done it before."

"And we know they needed new prisoners," Dream added, scowling. Sapnap nodded while the man just looked at them confused, his hazel eyes still glistening with unshed tears. Dream looked at him, "What's your name?"

"Jack.....Jack Manifold," The man swallowed nervously, "I...I'm sorry I almost got you killed."

"It takes more than explosion to kill me," Dream shrugged confidently and Sapnap rolled his eyes, "We still need to take you to the prison, Jack."

Jack's eyes widened in alarm, "B-But my family...my village...!"

"We'll tell Technoblade immediately what you told us," Sapnap assured him and Dream nodded in affirmation, "If we have to, we'll go there ourselves to make sure we catch those guys."

"I'm sure you understand why we can't just let you leave yet," Dream said seriously and Jack nodded slowly, hanging his head again. Dream's eyes softened. He was usually good at reading people and he could tell that Jack was telling the truth. He seemed to be just a kid that was trying to protect his parents and his fellow villagers. He was being blackmailed.

"I believe you, Jack," Dream muttered and Jack's eyes widened hopefully as he looked up at Dream's mask. Sapnap stared at Dream but said nothing, "We'll get this figured out, so just work with us, okay?"

Jack looked briefly stunned. Probably because the guy he tried to have blown up was being so understanding and almost kind to him but he wordlessly nodded. Dream looked at Sapnap, who just shrugged, which made Dream feel relieved. He was sure Sapnap also believed the kid.

They helped him stand up straighter so that he could walk the rest of the way with them to the prison.

George grabbed another tub of burn cream, the last they had on the shelves in the back of the hospital, and ran back to the main room where the others waited.

Phil laid on a coat, unmoving, with his sons all standing on one side looking down at him grimly. Ponk was on the other side alone, wrapping one of Phil's arms in layers of long white bandages to cover the burns there. They'd run out of burn cream treating both Phil's arms so that was why George had to go get the last one.

"Will there be scars?" Wilbur asked quietly while Techno and Tommy tensed at the question. Ponk didn't look up from his wrapping as he moved around to the other arm. Wilbur shuffled to make room for him.

"I can't say no for sure since a lot of these burns are terrible," Ponk frowned sympathetically, "But with the burn cream I made and a steady feeding of healing potions, I'm optimistic there will be minimal scarring."

"Good," Wilbur sighed, looking more stressed than George ever saw him. George silently took his place where Ponk used to be and uncovered Phil's burned leg to begin rubbing the burn cream on it. They still hadn't set Phil's broken wrist.

George finished gently applying the burn cream to Phil's burned leg and let Ponk move on to wrap it up. Ponk looked up at him with a proud smile, "George you remember how to make the molding for a cast right? Can you do that for me?"

"Yes," George nodded seriously, glad for another distraction. It kept him from worrying about Dream and Sapnap. He didn't like that the pillagers did all this, going through *all* this trouble, just to try to kill Dream specifically.

George moved to the back, grabbing the necessary molding to begin making the cast for Phil's wrist before coming back into the main room. He eventually helped Ponk put it in its designated place around Phil's wrist so that it could harden.

George peeked at Techno, Tommy, and Wilbur, frowning when he saw how oddly quiet and blank they were. He tried to level his voice and comfort them, "Phil will be okay, you know."

Techno glanced at him, "Good. He better be okay."

They were all startled when Tommy sighed loudly and pushed his face into his hands. Wilbur and Techno exchanged a confused, worried look before Wilbur placed a hand on Tommy's head, "Tommy? What's wrong?"

Tommy's voice was muffled, "I asked Phil to get me a new shield from storage on his way home...."

Techno and Wilbur's eyes both widened in understanding but George still felt confused until he remembered that the building that got destroyed was the storage building that held spare weapons and armor.

"That's why he offered to go there instead of Dream," Tommy added heavily and Techno scowled sharply.

"It's not your fault, Tommy," He began seriously, "You couldn't have known what would happen."

Tommy was still hiding his face in distress which caused Wilbur to look at Techno again as if they didn't know what to do. George opened his mouth to say something but was interrupted by someone coming into the building.

"I'm back! I got it!" Tubbo gasped out, as if he'd just run a marathon. Ranboo was behind him looking just as disheveled, "I got Phil's favorite pillow!"

Wilbur, Techno, and even Tommy as he finally uncovered his blotchy face, looked at Tubbo in shock. Wilbur looked almost incredulous while George just felt endlessly confused by these guys, "Tubbo...is that where you went? You went to our house just to get Phil's favorite pillow?"

"Well it's his favorite. I figured he'd like to lay on it," Tubbo answered, raising an eyebrow like he was confused as to why he had to explain himself. Wilbur blinked before laughing. Tommy couldn't help chuckling.

"Tubbo you *weirdo*," He laughed out and even Techno cracked a small smile. Tubbo just looked confused before shrugging, getting closer before frowning when he saw Tommy's reddened eyes. He didn't comment though.

"I'll take that, Tubbo," Ponk chuckled and Tubbo nodded, handing over the pillow. George helped Ponk rearrange the pillows behind Phil's head gently, "I finished bandaging him. Don't move his

hand from it's spot because the cast is still drying."

"When he wakes up we can give him the first healing potion which will also help him from feeling too much pain," George added as Techno nodded seriously at them, looking relieved.

"Thank you Ponk," Techno half-smiled before turning to George with the same smile, "Thank you George."

Warmth flooded in George's chest at the feeling of being useful and he beamed, "I'm glad to help!"

It became peacefully quiet as Ponk moved to wash his hands. George felt the worry for Sapnap and Dream from before make a reappearance. Ranboo glanced at him and frowned, "You look worried, George...."

George flinched when all the attention turned to him. He sighed, "I am....Dream tends to do stupid things sometimes..."

Techno stared at him before he offered, "How about I go check in with them? You said they went to find that guy that talked with Dream before?"

George nodded wordlessly and Techno scowled, something passing through his eyes, "Okay. I'll go see if they need help. I don't like the idea that this guy gets away anyways."

"You're leaving?" Tommy asked, his eyebrows drawing together until Techno poked his forehead purposefully, "Hey!"

"Yeah I'm leaving. So I need you to stay here with Phil, just in case," Techno told him and Tommy's eyes grew wide at the seriousness in his voice. He nodded silently, "Good. And Wilbur, can you go tell Eret what's going on? I'm sure he's freaking out right now."

Wilbur's eyes widened like he just realized, "Oh, right! I'll do that."

Tommy waved them off after promising to protect Philza. George just simply stared after them as they left, hoping that Techno found Dream and Sapnap before anything happened.

"There's only one thing left to do now," Ponk announced carefully as he finished cleaning his hands, his eyebrows knitting just from under his colorful mask, "We have to put the oxygen mask on him."

George froze, almost forgetting that completely, "Right..."

"That'll help him breathe, right?" Tubbo asked slowly, looking over at Phil.

"Yes," George answered as Ponk went into the back, "It'll help him recover from that quicker."

"He breathed in a lot of that smoke though," Tommy fretted as he glared at the floor.

"He'll still be okay after a couple of weeks," George assured him and Tommy relaxed, "He'll just be coughing for awhile."

Tommy's shoulders slumped, "I shouldn't have asked him to get that shield for me."

Tubbo looked over at Tommy, concerned. Ranboo shifted anxiously, like he didn't know what to say. George frowned but understood Tommy's guilt, "You didn't bomb the place, Tommy. *You* didn't decide to try and kill someone. The pillagers did, so it's all on them."

Tommy looked over at George and George grinned, trying to cheer him up, "Just focus on what you can do to help Phil now and what you can do to get revenge for what those assholes did!"

Tommy blinked at him before he grinned back, "Yeah. That's.....that's right! We can get back at those assholes!"

Tubbo brightened considerably and shot George a grateful look whilst Ranboo relaxed. Tubbo cheered, "Exactly! They won't know what hit them!"

"Yeah!" Tommy cheered with him and George chuckled before going silent when Ponk walked into the room with a distressed look on his face.

"Ponk, what's wrong?" George asked as both Tommy and Tubbo went silent. Ponk had the plastic-looking oxygen mask in his hands but nothing else.

"The list you made earlier....I completely forgot! We needed to stock up on a lot of supplies we used up and one of those were a couple of oxygen tanks," Ponk explained and George's eyes widened as he wrote the list himself earlier that very day.

"Oh!" George gasped, "So we don't have a oxygen tank here?"

Ponk shook his head, frowning, "No, we'd have to get it from the storage area."

It went awkwardly silent in the room and George bit his lip nervously. They still didn't know the full extent of the situation and it probably wasn't completely safe to go off by themselves until they knew what was going on. Still....Phil needed that oxygen to recover.

"I'll just have to go and get the spare ones in storage," George spoke up and Ponk scowled but couldn't refuse the idea. He was more experienced than George so he needed to be there for sure just in case anything else happened.

"You can't go alone..." Tubbo frowned worriedly as he looked from Tommy to George.

"I'll go with him," Ranboo reassured the small boy and Tubbo blinked at him. George was also surprised. Ranboo smiled slightly.

"It might not be safe to go by yourself and if I go with you I'm sure no one will wanna come close," He joked in a self-deprecating manner making George frown. Tubbo glared at him and smacked his arm.

"Fine, you can come but not because of *that*," George rolled his eyes and Ranboo shrugged, "It's just smart to not go walking around by myself right now. Thanks."

"No problem," Ranboo grinned and turned to Tubbo, "You'll stay with Tommy right?"

"Yeah!" Tubbo nodded seriously and Tommy relaxed, looking grateful as he looked back at his injured dad. Ponk also seemed relieved.

"I'll try to hurry," George assured him and Ponk nodded seriously. George walked out of the hospital with Ranboo trailing behind him leisurely.

On the way to the back where the storage buildings were, George couldn't help but notice two things immediately. The first was that there wasn't as much smoke in the air. It wasn't as thick either. The second was that people went out of their way to not walk anywhere close to Ranboo.

Suddenly his self-deprecating joke from before held more meaning and George felt his heart break for Ranboo. He couldn't completely get mad at the people because he knew it was human nature to be scared of something they didn't understand, but *still*.

George glared at every single person they passed, making the ones that stared at Ranboo in an obvious manner duck their heads. He felt some satisfaction at that. Ranboo seemed to notice, "You don't have to do that. They'll stare regardless."

"Doesn't mean I'll let them get away with it," George muttered and Ranboo smiled at him, "You're my friend, Ranboo. You're a person just as much as them so they can fuck off."

Ranboo laughed and George felt a bit better to hear him sound much happier, "Thank you George! You're so nice!"

"It's just what friends do," George denied, shaking his head but Ranboo still smiled at him. George blushed and looked away.

They made it to the storage area a few minutes later and they both paused when they noticed the fires had been put out. Several village warriors were still walking around. It looked as if they were cleaning up. George noticed Puffy still among them, cleaning and giving out orders. There were still thick white smoke coming from the burning building but it thinned the higher up it went.

"C'mon, the medical stuff should be in this building," George said quietly, nudging Ranboo to follow him. Ranboo just nodded and George led him up to the fourth storage building down from the burnt one.

As they entered the building, George looked around at the shelves that held various extra medical supplies. There were crates of extra bandages, potions, and spare gloves. There were also extra surgical tools though not as many and George finally spotted the extra oxygen tanks stacked in the corner. There seemed to be six.

George grabbed one and Ranboo offered to hold another. George was thankful because they were slightly heavier than he'd thought. Or maybe he just needed to work out more.

They exited the storage building and George jumped when Puffy suddenly called him over, "Oh, George! Perfect timing! Can you come here for a sec!?"

George blinked at her but obliged and went up to her. She looked at him and Ranboo curiously but got straight to the point, "I just wanted to let you know that some guys got hurt trying to help put out the fires so they'll be heading to the hospital. Nothing serious though."

George frowned, concerned, "Oh, that sucks. I'm glad no one else was seriously injured though. We should be able to handle more patients I think."

Puffy seemed relieved, "Thank God, I just wanted to give you a heads up on that!"

"It seems like you got the fire dealt with," Ranboo interjected suddenly as he looked around. Puffy nodded, looking around tiredly.

"Yeah, it took quite some time but we dealt with it," Puffy sighed out as she looked at the destruction, "Now we're just cleaning up the rubble and stuff like that. It'll take awhile....."

While Puffy was talking to Ranboo, George saw a weird glint in the distance and narrowed his eyes in that direction. He nearly jumped when he thought he saw the shadow of a person and what looked to be the glint of sunlight hitting iron armor. It was so fast that he couldn't be sure if he saw what he saw.

"George?" Ranboo trailed off worriedly and George shook his head out of his daze.

"I...I thought I saw something or....someone," George replied shakily and Puffy tensed. George pointed behind the burning building, where Sapnap had seen the painted pillager symbol earlier, "Over there. It looked like someone for a second but I can't be sure...."

"I'll go check it out," Puffy scowled, looking battle-ready. Something told George that she shouldn't go alone.

"Wait, we'll go with you," Ranboo said seriously. He must have felt it too. George nodded and Puffy didn't comment, just nodded as well. They followed behind her and George prepared himself for the worst.

Were there others stalking them? Were they enemies or did George really just see things and get anxious for no reason?

They neared the remains of the burnt building and turned the corner. George gasped at what he saw and dropped the oxygen tank immediately. There were three iron-wearing pillagers, two of which George recognized immediately as the two that pushed him into the sweatbox back in the nether. They were actually alive?!

Puffy and Ranboo immediately reacted. Puffy drew her sword and engaged them as they panicked at being caught. Ranboo dropped the other oxygen tank and rushed to help her. George jolted out of his shock when one of the two pillagers he recognized came at him with a sword.

"Whoa!" He gasped, barely escaping the wild swings of the pillager's sword. Ranboo and Puffy were too busy fighting the other two pillagers to help him so he was on his own.

George reacted fast and grabbed a piece of debris, a plank, off the ground to block being hit by the pillager's sword. The pillager was surprised and that allowed George to push him away before readying himself to block another attack. He was sure the other warriors would hear what was going on soon. Maybe he should call out for help-

The pillager was baring down on him before he could even finish thinking that thought. George almost didn't block in time and his arms shook from trying to hold the other back. The pillager had a hateful look in his eyes that shook George to the core.

"We *need* to know," The pillager began growling and George flinched at suddenly being spoken to, "Did your lover die like we hoped?"

George blanched, his eyes shooting wide. That brief distraction caused him to be pushed back. George gasped and then cried out in pain when the pillager slashed at him, catching him in the

eyebrow with his sword.

Instantly blood was pooling down into his eye from the cut, but George knew it wasn't that bad, it just stung like hell. The pillager was already trying to slash at him again but George parried with the debris he held, feeling growing panic as he couldn't open one of his eyes.

"Tell me," The pillager demanded, snarling. George would die before he gave him the satisfaction.

"George!" Ranboo yelled in concern and George wanted to tell him not to worry about him, that could get the boy hurt.

A shadow fell over them from above, confusing George. The pillager looked up and gasped, throwing himself back. But it was too late. George watched, stunned into silence as the shadow turned out to be Techno literally jumping into the fight from no where, armed with not a sword..

A fucking *pickaxe*! Where did he even grab that from?

The pillager didn't know what hit him. Techno snarled, looking more like a wild boar than he had any right to as he took his pickaxe and swung it upwards. George flinched when the pickaxe pierced through the bottom of the pillager's chin, coming out of his forehead in a gory death. The pillager's face was frozen in panic, his mouth hanging open unnaturally.

George heard the other two pillagers cry out in fright but George couldn't look away from the gory scene. Suddenly he felt nauseous. Techno turned, snarling at the other two pillagers, "Puffy keep a hold on that one. We're taking these two prisoners. They'll prove useful to us."

"Of course," Puffy responded eagerly, a hard edge to her voice, "They'll definitely be useful."

"P-Please have mercy...." One pleaded and George felt almost incredulous. These were people that had *no* quarrels with killing, kidnapping, and torturing other people yet they were also the biggest cowards George had ever met.

"Oh you won't die," Techno chuckled darkly, "You'll be useful in telling us where the others are."

The other two pillagers went silent at that. George flinched when someone touched him and he relaxed when he noticed it was just Ranboo, looking worried, "George, you okay?"

"Yeah, it's just a small cut," George reassured him, wincing as he touched the cut and Ranboo looked relieved. It wasn't deep thank God.

Techno then turned to him, seemingly hearing what he said, "You held out well, George. I was just

coming to check in with Puffy when I heard the commotion."

"Thank God you did," George chuckled, still feeling shocked, "Thanks by the way."

"No problem," Techno shrugged and held out a hand to help him up. George allowed him to aide him and Techno added, "I checked in with Dream and Sapnap earlier. They're okay and they captured the boy that spoke to Dream earlier. I just parted ways with them at the prison."

"Boy?" Ranboo blinked, surprised, and George felt just as startled at the revelation.

"He's in a prison cell right now," Techno ignored the question and looked back at George, "Dream and Sapnap went looking for you at the hospital. You should go back now."

"Ah," George's eyes widened, realizing Dream was going to *freak out* when he saw the blood covering half of his face. He wasn't looking forward to that particular storm, "Right..."

"Puffy and I will take these two to the prison and clean up here. I'll come by to check on Phil again soon," Techno told him and George nodded, steering himself and Ranboo past the gory body to pick up the oxygen tanks they dropped earlier.

George forced himself not to look back at the scene as he walked away with Ranboo.

Ranboo looked at George funny when he stopped just before they entered the hospital and took a deep breath. George shrugged at him as an answer and hesitantly pushed open the hospital doors.

As expected, those inside all turned when they entered. George's eyes immediately went to where Dream stood leaning against a wall in between Tubbo and Sapnap. Dream beamed excitedly when he saw George all but one microsecond before he saw the blood on George's face.

George tried to wipe a lot of it away before coming here, especially away from his eyes so he could see out of it, but he knew it probably still looked bad. Everyone looked shocked to see the blood on him.

Dream went from excited to pissed in an instant, making Ranboo inch away from him, "George! What the fuck happened?!"

George flinched when Dream marched up to him. Sapnap followed him looking worried but still tried to make a joke, "Were you guys attacked or did you trip?"

George rolled his eyes at Sapnap best he could until Dream grabbed him and looked all over his face, "Where's the blood coming from?"

"Above my eyebrow," George answered immediately and for some reason, the thing the pillager said as he attacked him came back to his mind. He asked if his lover died yet.....how did he know they were together?

"The tanks!" Ponk exclaimed happily before sobering up when he came into George's view, "Thanks for getting them. I'm guessing it wasn't a simple trip?"

"No," George sighed and Tubbo looked at both him and Ranboo in concern while Tommy rose an eyebrow.

"Dream can take care of you. I gotta get these hooked up for Phil so can breathe easier," Ponk addressed and George didn't even get a chance to respond because Dream nodded, letting go of his face to herd him onto a cot.

"Does it need stitches?" Sapnap asked, looking towards Dream, who tilted his head, studying the wound. George rolled his eyes as they talked like he wasn't sitting right in front of them.

"You aren't hurt, right Ranboo?" Tubbo asked warily and Ranboo shook his head as he smiled. Tubbo let out a sigh of relief.

"What even happened?" Tommy asked loudly, looking both lost and frustrated.

"We were attacked by those pillagers," Ranboo explained in a simple manner. George tensed when Sapnap and Dream both froze, locking eyes with him.

"Two of them where the ones that dragged me to the sweatbox," George added quietly, so only Sapnap and Dream heard. He didn't know whether to pity the pillagers or feel happy they were so angry on his behalf.

"What happened?" Dream questioned through his teeth, dropping his hand from George's face so that he could clench it in a proper fist. Sapnap was glaring, not at him but rather through him.

George sighed and immediately launched into the whole story with Ranboo adding his side of the fight. Tommy scowled darkly, "They were coming back to see if Dream died? Kinda stupid of 'em if you ask me."

"I'll say," Tubbo giggled before outright smirking, "Techno killed one of them....serves 'em right."

Ranboo's eyes widened and even George looked at Tubbo in surprise but realized he had ample reason of his own to hate them so much. Phil's injuries alone were enough to make any of them want to hurt the pillagers.

"I wish I could have seen the pickaxe kill," Sapnap whistled, looking impressed and George shuddered as he remembered it vividly. It'd probably haunt his dreams for awhile.

Dream looked at him in concern, "You okay?"

"Mhm," George lied, shrugging his shoulder. He desperately changed the subject, "Does it need stitches?"

Dream frowned and hummed in thought as he looked at the wound again, "I don't think so. It's already stopped bleeding. It's deep enough to explain the blood but not *that* deep."

"Well good. I hate stitches," George chuckled but paused when Dream frowned further and grabbed his hand, giving it a squeeze. He hated seeing Dream so worried so he tried to change the subject again, "Techno said you found that guy who tried to kill you?"

Dream sighed, looking conflicted, "Yeah....he seems to be telling the truth. He's just a kid being blackmailed."

Dream launched into all the details with Sapnap providing ample commentary. George felt his heart lurch in sympathy for this guy that was only desperate to protect his family and villagers.

"That's sad," Tubbo frowned, "They have to resort to such methods. That poor guy!"

Tommy looked at Tubbo and then to Dream, "So you really believe him?"

"Yeah," Dream nodded seriously and Tommy hummed, looking to Phil.

"I guess I understand why he did it," Tommy said, still staring at Phil. George smiled to himself.

"Still wish I could have seen that pickaxe death," Sapnap commented randomly. They all looked at him.

"You're still on that?" George laughed out and Dream shook his head, snorting in amusement as he applied medicine to George's injury before taping a bandage to the cut.

"It sounds so amazing!" Sapnap gushed, his eyes lighting up, "And just what the doctor ordered!"

"You're kinda crazy," Ponk laughed out and that made the others chuckle to themselves or laugh outright like Tommy.

They all stopped, however, when the door opened before relaxing when Techno stepped through looking disheveled yet still calm at the same time. Wilbur and Eret stepped through after him. Eret frowned when he saw Phil.

"How's he doing?" Techno asked, his eyes going to Ponk.

"He's alright. I've hooked up the oxygen now and the mask will help him breathe easier. All that's left is for him to wake up so I can give him the first healing potion," Ponk explained as Techno and Wilbur looked relieved.

Eret immediately turned to George, which made him blink at the sudden movement, "I just heard what happened. Are you okay?"

"Yes, it wasn't bad," George smiled and Eret looked at Ranboo, scanning him before sighing in relief.

"Can you tell me your side of what happened? I already asked Puffy," Techno said seriously. Ranboo and George shared a look.

George immediately told the story again and hesitated as he told them about what the pillager said to him. Dream leaned back in shock because he hadn't said that the first time. He wasn't really sure why he didn't.

"Wha.....how'd he know?" Sapnap rose an eyebrow, "It's not like you were together when we were all captured. In fact, you guys didn't even see each other until we escaped."

Wilbur looked disturbed, "Either we've been stalked more than we thought or we have a traitor...."

"I can't imagine who would betray us," Techno sighed, looking stressed.

"I think it'd be easy for one of them to sneak in and stalk us," Tubbo commented and they all looked to him, "This Jack guy was already able to pose a warrior pretty easily."

"True," Tommy growled out before looking to Techno, "So what's next?"

"Next we question those three we caught," Techno answered with a faraway glare settling on his face. George noticed that Dream frowned, looking worried about something.

"About Jack...." Dream spoke up, looking at Techno, "What will you do? I personally believe his story so...."

Techno looked at the ground, "I'm in the middle of having his story confirmed and I think he could be the key. If they blackmailed him about his village then they could be near there."

Sapnap's eyes lit up, "True! We could go and take care of them....though I doubt it'd be *all* the pillagers. We still don't know where their base is."

"That's what the other two are for," Eret smiled, but his smile was devious and George gulped, "We can question those two on where their base is."

George frowned when he noticed that Dream still looked worried. He put a hand on his shoulder and squeezed. Dream looked at him and smiled a little before glancing at Techno again, "If Jack's story is true, will you let him go?"

Tommy shot Dream a look, "He hurt Phil!"

"Not on purpose," Dream argued, narrowing his eyes at Tommy, "And we'd probably all do the same thing he did if our parents and a bunch of innocent people were at stake."

"Yeah but...."

"Tommy," Wilbur sighed, "Jack is about the same age as Tubbo. He's 18. We shouldn't punish him too harshly for trying to protect his family."

Tommy deflated at those words, grumbling to himself. Tubbo looked at him worriedly before glancing at the others, "What if those two pillagers don't give up their base?"

The question hung in the air uncomfortably. Techno stared at Tubbo and then muttered, "Then eventually they'll be executed for their crimes. They're too dangerous to our village to be kept alive."

Tubbo didn't seem to be bothered by that and George wasn't either. He didn't have any sympathy for any of the pillagers. Techno turned to Dream suddenly, "You seem unusually worried about that guy, Jack. I won't hurt him if that's what you're worried about. Even if he *did* hurt Phil. I understand his motive to do anything for his family. I'd do the same."

Wilbur and Tommy looked at him like he just randomly admitted he were a fairy. George bit his lip to keep from laughing out loud. It was obvious by their reactions that Techno doesn't outwardly show his affections much.

Dream wasn't as cautious. He openly laughed alongside Ranboo. Sapnap grinned toothily, shaking his head in amusement.

Techno continued on like none of that happened, making George chuckle in disbelief, "I'm going back to the prison but I'll be back again and we can set up a shift between us on who'll stay with Phil."

"Sounds fine to me," Wilbur shrugged, grinning at Techno, "Don't worry about us too much while you're gone."

Techno rolled his eyes but George could see the concealed fondness as Tommy laughed at what Wilbur said. Techno left after that and Eret went along with him.

Dream glanced at George, "Wanna head home? There's not much left for us to do personally."

George glanced at Ponk who gave him a thumbs up. George smiled and then nodded at Dream. Sapnap turned to them, "I guess if you guys are leaving I'll go check up on Karl and Quackity. I'm sure they're freaking out about what all happened."

"Probably knowing them," Dream teased and Sapnap laughed, leaving the building. Dream and George followed him out before parting ways with him and heading towards their home. George was quite honestly ready to lie on his bed and not move for the rest of the day.

Dream was tense the entire time they walked home, looking around restlessly like was making sure they weren't actively being stalked. George frowned, hating that he was so worked up. He tried to think of a way to get him to relax, at least a little, or George knew he'd never sleep tonight.

He was still thinking when they made it to their house. He glanced at Dream, who was still tense like he was battle-ready. As soon as they entered the home George blinked as he got an idea on how to get Dream to relax.

"Let's go," George spoke up, almost startling Dream as they hadn't said a word on the way home. Dream rose an eyebrow, confused, but obediently followed George to their bedroom, "You tired?"

"Not really," Dream muttered, shaking his head. George smiled and walked up to him.

"Tough," George said and pushed him on the bed. Dream gasped, looking at George with bewilderment. George laughed as he got on the bed beside Dream and hesitated to take off his mask. Dream's look softened and he nodded, giving his permission even though he usually takes it off whenever they're home. George didn't want to do anything Dream didn't want though so that was why he hesitated.

Dream looked at him, his eyes growing frustrated and sad which confused George because he was pretty sure he was smiling. Dream lifted his hand to gently brush it against the bandage he put on George's head, "I'm sorry you went through something scary today."

George blinked at him before smiling again, "You did too, more than me actually."

"I wasn't *actually* attacked though," Dream smiled back, dropping his arm back to the bed as he looked up at George fondly.

"But..." George frowned as he thought more on what he was about to say. The more he thought about it the more it bothered him, "You have no idea how I felt when I heard a bunch of psychopaths want you dead."

"It's not a big deal. It's like a regular Tuesday for me," Dream shrugged and George laughed in disbelief at what he said and the horrible honesty to it.

"It *shouldn't* be," George sighed out and Dream stared up at him wordlessly.

"I don't want to talk about those things right now," He said slowly. The way he said it was almost strange, making George look down at him in confusion.

"Then what do you want to talk about?" He asked curiously before yelping when Dream quickly sat up, pushed George down on the bed, and pinned his hands beside his head. George blushed furiously when Dream straddled his thighs and smirked down at him.

"This," He answered simply as he continued to smirk down at him, "Isn't this something better to talk about?"

George was still blushing a little and pouted, "But we aren't *talking*...."

Dream chuckled. He ducked his head down nosing at George's neck, making him gasp before kissing at the same spot. George swallowed heavily. Dream moved to his ear and George was sure he about died when Dream whispered, "Tell me if you don't like anything or want to stop."

He didn't even get a chance to respond before Dream kissed his ear, making him shudder. Then he went back to kissing his neck like he was trying to find a spot he liked best. George felt his whole body heat up like he was on fire when Dream started nipping and licking at one spot just above his collarbone before outright sucking.

"Dream!" George gasped loudly, the pleasurable feeling going straight through him. His heart began hammering. Dream paused before continuing when George didn't ask him to stop.

George didn't realize kissing and sucking on someone's neck could feel *that* good. He winced when Dream lightly bit at the spot before shuddering and whimpering when he sucked again.

Dream gave the spot one last lick before moving on, glancing at George's red face before moving to kiss at a different spot on the right side of George's neck. He tested for a sensitive spot until he found it close to the underside junction where George's chin met his neck.

"Drea-" George was cut off when Dream began nipping at that area. George whimpered, his back arching slightly. Both George and Dream were surprised at that but Dream didn't stop. George clenched his hands around Dream's and bit his lip.

A pleasurable jolt went through his nerves when Dream sucked on the spot, making him gasp and arch his back against Dream's chest again. George clenched his eyes shut, his heart hammering so much he was sure it was audible.

As if he were teasing him, Dream let his teeth lightly scrap the newly sensitive area and George groaned loudly, squirming, "Dream..."

Dream gave the spot one last kiss before leaning up and George felt himself blush as he looked up at Dream, "You still okay? I'm not doing too much?"

"I'm okay....you're....its okay," George stammered out and his embarrassment was worth it when Dream's darkened eyes lit up at his response. George wanted to laugh. It was almost *too* easy to make Dream happy.

"Hmmm," Dream hummed, a happy smile on his face as his fingers traced the spots he kissed on George's neck. George wouldn't be surprised if there were marks already showing with how eager Dream had been.

Dream leaned back down and George realized how Dream was practically engulfing his whole body just trying to *kiss* him. He'd noticed their size differences before but never like *this* and it made George's stomach backflip.

George was surprised that Dream kissed him on the lips instead of going back to his neck but he wasn't going to complain. When Dream grazed his teeth along the bottom of George's lips he dropped his mouth open partly in shock before letting out a surprised moan when Dream hesitantly deepened the kiss by letting his tongue venture further into George's mouth.

Oh, okay....that was certainly new. George definitely wasn't complaining, it felt weird at first but when George accidentally brushed his tongue against Dream's, Dream let out the most attractive groan George ever heard in his life. George's eyes fluttered shut and he allowed himself to enjoy the sensations of making out with Dream.

Eventually Dream parted from George, just slightly, and looked down at him in a daze. George's eyes widened at how Dream's lips looked completely kiss swollen. Dream seemed to be studying him as well which made a jolt of self-consciousness run through him. Did he look like a mess?

Dream brushed his thumb gently against George's lips and George parted them on instinct. Dream grinned proudly, "I wish you could see yourself George. You look like a wreck."

"What?!" George gasped and Dream laughed when he tried to sit up but couldn't all the way since Dream was still straddling his thighs. Dream put a hand on his chest and gently pushed him back down before leaning down to his ear.

"It's not a bad thing," Dream murmured and George shivered, squirming a bit before gasping when Dream nibbled at his ear.

"Dream!" George gasped out, his hands shooting up to grab the sleeves covering both his arms. He squeezed his eyes shut again. Dream chuckled right in his ear before leaning back again. George blushed, glaring at him when he noticed Dream smirking at him. Smug bastard.

"Did you like that or not? Cause I think you kinda liked it," Dream said teasingly and George was absolutely *not* having it. It wasn't fair that he was always the one being flustered. Sometimes he felt so flustered or embarrassed he could die. It never seemed like that for Dream though.

"You tell me," George replied nonchalantly and Dream was only able to raise an eyebrow in confusion before George jerked him down using his sleeves so that he could lick the shell of Dream's ear.

Dream gasped, clutching onto George's waist in a way that made George squirm slightly, "Holy-"

George giggled right in Dream's ear, though he didn't mean to, and Dream groaned, "See? I think you're right, it *does* feel good."

"Y-Yeah," Dream swallowed and George glanced over at him to see that his face was buried in George's shoulder, "We should stop though."

"Huh?" George blinked, confused by Dream's sudden will to stop.

"Don't make me say it," Dream mumbled into his shoulder and then George's eyes widened in understanding. He bit his lip. Oh....he was almost disappointed.

He never got to see Dream like this. It gave him a sense of power to be able to fluster Dream the way he so easily does to George. However, he didn't want to get Dream or himself too worked up. He still wasn't ready to take that next step with Dream yet.

So instead of teasing him more, George wound his arms around Dream's torso and hugged him tightly. Dream shifted to get more comfortable and sighed in relief, "You really didn't mind, right?"

I should have asked if it was alright to kiss you like that."

George absolutely melted, "It was alright. I would have told you stop if not."

"Okay," Dream replied, sounding so relieved that it made George laugh softly. That was one thing he loved a lot about Dream. He was constantly making sure George was comfortable with him.

Eventually George let go of Dream so that he could lay beside him instead of on top of him. Dream looked at George's face, curling an arm around his waist to bring him closer to Dream's chest, "I'm completely worn out now."

"Me too," George sighed, closing his eyes and leaning his head against Dream's chest, "May as well get as much rest as we can. Tomorrow will be an eventful day."

"Yeah..." Dream trailed off, pulling George even closer against him. George felt numerous feelings wash over him in that moment, giving him goosebumps.

Dream *always* made him feel safe.

Chapter End Notes

So I have some questions....I'm not used to writing really heated moments like that. I'm more used to writing fluffy moments! How did I do with the making out scene? ☺ I used a lot of different inspiration from books and fics I've read over years! Is there any way I could have made it better?

I could use any feedback you guys have on the little make-out scene or any scene in general! By the way, I'm all for George getting more confident with Dream!

Also, I plan on doing smut eventually, even if it's just one chapter! If you guys don't like that then I'll be sure to leave a warning in that particular chapter whenever it comes out so that you can avoid it! ☺

Chapter 25

Chapter Summary

Philza wakes up. Dream takes George on a much needed date and things escalate.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I'm posting this chapter super early because I had the time to get it done early this week! Not that the same can be said for next week.... ☺

Thank you guys for the 190 bookmarks, holy crap!

Warnings for: horror themes related to watching someone die and burning alive (wanted to warn in case someone has fears of those things- it's just in a nightmare though!)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

They came in the dead of night when Dream and George were sleeping together in their bed. Hands grabbed at both of them, startling them awake as they immediately struggled against whoever was holding them.

George tried to bite against the hand grabbing him but it was thwarted as whoever held him hit him so hard against the head that his vision blackened. Just before his consciousness faded he was sure he heard Dream yelling his name.

By the time George opened his eyes he was already tied up. His hands were bound behind a wooden post and his ankles similarly bound up. George panicked, thrashing around.

"He's finally awake," Someone said lowly and George looked up to see several men staring at him with varying degrees of hostility. Dream was lying in the middle of them, barely conscious. He was bleeding in several different places and had one eye swelled shut. George's heart leapt in his throat.

"Now we can finish this," Another person snarled and when George looked at him, he realized the men holding them hostage were the pillagers from the same group as the ones that locked him and his friends up in the nether; the ones Techno basically declared war on. George's eyes widened.

"You shouldn't have messed with our plans and killed our people," The first pillager growled out as he gave Dream's body a harsh kick in the side. Dream groaned and his eyes opened a little more.

"Dream!" George exclaimed desperately, hardly believing that this was happening. He struggled anew but all that served to do was rub his wrists raw against the rope, "Dream get up!"

Dream seemed to hear him and with less cloudy eyes, looked up at him. George panicked when three of the pillagers came behind Dream armed with swords and held him up. Dream seemed a bit out of it but still tried to fight back.

The pillagers holding him were able to overpower him together and one yanked his head back by his blonde hair, moving a sword to his throat as George started to deliriously beg for Dream's life. The pillager acted as if he didn't hear his words and simply drew his sword across Dream's throat harshly.

Immediately blood was squirting out of Dream's throat and a scream tore open George's throat as tears rapidly filled his eyes. Dream's eyes widened as he choked and fell back down to the ground without the pillagers holding him up.

George was still screaming, helplessly trashing against the ropes binding him to the wooden post as he watched the light give out in his boyfriend's eyes.

George slumped over, sobbing desperately and he was unable to take his eyes off his boyfriend's limp body. Blood was quickly pooling around him.

"You're next," A pillager sneered at him but he still couldn't look away. He didn't even care at this point.

George didn't realize what they meant to do until a pillager came up to him with a torch. His heart skipped several beats and his breath hitched in his sore throat as he realized what was about to happen.

The pillager dropped the torch under his feet, against the wooden post, and George's eyes widened with horror as the fire started to spread, licking at his feet as he screamed again.

The pillagers laughed the entire time as his body was eventually engulfed in flames all while he screamed so hard blood was coming from his mouth-

George was still screaming as his eyes shot open. He sat up, struggling with the blankets covering him. It was then that he vaguely realized he wasn't bound by ropes anymore.

Dream scrambled out of bed quickly at his screams and that caught George's eye. His scream died in his throat when he realized he was in their bedroom, in their bed, not out in some random place being killed.

"George, George what is it?!" Dream demanded as he crawled back on the bed in front of George, grabbing his upper arms. George inhaled shakily, choking on a sob as he covered his face with his hands. It felt so *real*.

Dream instantly pulled George into his lap the moment he sobbed. He was sitting sideways so that his head could tuck into Dream's neck. George bit his lip as he choked on ugly sobs, trying to stop them. Dream clutched him close and George was surprised when he felt Dream's fingers rubbing on the exposed part of his stomach. That felt almost ticklish, but nice. *So nice*. Dream was always so nice.

"Dream..." George trailed off, sniffing once. Dream didn't stop rubbing his stomach but pulled away a little to look down at him. George felt guilty at the anxious almost scared look in his wide goldish eyes.

"Nightmare?" Dream asked hesitantly, frowning. George nodded and Dream's frown deepened, tugging him close once again. George felt insanely drained now that he sobbed it out, his reddened eyes felt like they were burning, "Want to talk about it?"

George paused as he thought about it. Might as well. He'd worry over the nightmare endless if he didn't spill his guts, "W-We were both captured by those pillagers....."

He couldn't ignore the way Dream tensed, his other hand that wasn't rubbing his stomach in little patterns gripped his side. George continued anyways, "They knocked me out so I don't know what all they did to you, but they ganged up on you and hurt you enough that you were so out if it. I woke up tied to this wooden post and...."

His breathing was picking up again and Dream soothed him, "It's okay, Georgie, take your time. I'm not going anywhere."

God, how he loved this man. Tears pricked George's eyes and he leaned back to look into Dream's own worried eyes again, "They slit your throat right in *front* of me, Dream. I had to watch you bleed out and die. And then they set me on fire, laughing as I burned..."

"George...." Dream was speechless, his eyes widened in horror and he pushed George into his chest, holding him tight, "That's horrible. What a terrifying nightmare..."

"I've never had one that bad before," George said tearfully, a few more tears trailing down his cheeks. He pressed his face in Dream's shoulder and felt his tears get soaked up.

Dream held him, still rubbing his stomach and even his side, until George calmed down. Dream spoke up, a finality to the confidence in his tone, "I won't ever let that happen George, especially not to *you*."

"How do you know that for sure?" George whispered, his hands tightening in Dream's nightshirt. Dream chuckled.

"Because there's not a thing on this earth that'd stop me from protecting you," Dream replied, a cheesy smile on his face. George huffed out a laugh into his shirt. That was almost cringe if George wasn't so desperate for the reassurance. And somehow he believed Dream.

"Not a thing, huh?"

"That's right. *Nothing*," Dream answered seriously and George blinked, looking up at him, "You believe me, right? I'll keep you safe no matter what I have to do."

George smiled a little, "I do believe you. You can't die either though....otherwise you can't protect me."

"I know," Dream snickered, ducking down to place a kiss on the side of George's head, "You okay now?"

"Yeah, I think so," George sighed tiredly, "I hope I don't have anymore dreams like that."

Dream hummed and he appeared to be getting sleepy again, "Here..."

George wondered what he was doing until Dream basically manhandled George easily into lying partially on top of Dream. His head was on his chest, one leg was entangled with Dream's own, and half his torso was on top of Dream's. George flushed at how easy it was for Dream to manhandle him.

"This better?" Dream asked softly, his eyes already drooping as he pressed George closer with an arm around his waist while the other pulled their blankets back over them.

"Yes...." George whispered, closing his eyes to the steady beat of Dream's heart.

What would he do without this guy?

When George woke up again, there was natural light in the room coming from the window and Dream wasn't in bed. George yawned as he sat up and stretched his arms before looking at Dream's side of the bed in confusion. Unless he was in the bathroom Dream was *always* in bed until George woke up.

He'd told Dream he didn't have to wait for George to wake up to leave the bed but Dream just said that he liked to cuddle with George. George shook his head with a smile at the memory.

George jumped when their bedroom door opened but relaxed quickly when Dream came into the room. George resisted the urge to giggle when he saw Dream with his tongue sticking out in concentration before his giggle got stuck in his throat when he realized Dream was carrying a tray of food.

Dream looked up and blinked in surprise to see George awake. Then, to George's surprise, Dream blushed a little. He looked down for a second before coming to the bed and looking at George, "Good morning, Georgie."

"Good morning," George smiled, raising an eyebrow in confusion at the tray his boyfriend held.

"I made some breakfast for you to eat in bed...." Dream explained though he looked embarrassed and even slightly worried, "I figured I could do this for you since you had a rough night."

George's smile fell and he felt numerous feelings wash over him. Considerate. Why was he so *considerate*? George swallowed heavily, "Dream, y-you didn't have to do that...."

"I wanted to," Dream replied in a simple manner though he still looked worried. He sat on the bed and placed the tray in George's lap, "You don't mind, right?"

The food on the tray consisted of a fried egg, toasted bread, and strips of bacon. There was even a cup with what smelled like apple juice. George's eyes watered again, "Of course I don't mind....this is amazing Dream!"

George glanced over to see Dream deflate in relief. Apparently he was worried George wouldn't like it. George shook his head briefly in amusement before he realized there was nothing for Dream, "What about your breakfast?"

"I ate mine while I cooked yours," Dream grinned, looking pleased and George narrowed his eyes at him suspiciously. He didn't look like he was lying though so George decided to take his word for it.

"Well, alright," George replied and grabbed his fork to begin eating. Dream sat cross-legged by his side and talked to him while he ate.

It was an amazing way to wake up. As he was eating George laughed when Dream stole a piece of his bacon and a piece of his bread, grinning toothily like he was some kind of shark. He was an *idiot* and George was so glad he had Dream.

Dream even kissed him between bites sometimes, completely without warning and then teased him for his apparent morning breath, much to George's mortification.

George set aside his mostly empty tray and tried to get up but Dream wound his arms around his waist and pulled him back in his lap, "Dream! I gotta wash up!"

"I was kidding about the morning breath Georgie," Dream wheezed, squeezing his waist. George rolled his eyes.

"Okay but I still need a shower before we head out," George told him, trying and failing to turn his head to look at him. Why was he so fucking tall? It's so unfair!

George froze momentarily when Dream mouthed at his shoulder near his neck, "Let's take a shower together then."

He *knew* Dream was still kidding. He *knew* that Dream would never force him into anything he didn't 100% want, but the thought of being naked with Dream in a shower did things to George's insides. His face burned at the images in his head.

Dream chuckled against his skin and George bit at his tongue to pull himself back before deciding to get payback against Dream and tease him as well, "Sure, why not?"

To his immense amusement and joy, Dream stuttered, leaning back like George hissed at him. At that, George had to laugh. Dream inhaled sharply, his arms still wound against George's waist, "Y-You mean it?"

George blinked, his smile falling. Dream thought he was serious? George squirmed until he twisted all the way in Dream's arms. Dream let him. George grinned at Dream's hesitant face but his eyes flashed with want. George leaned in, his lips ghosting over Dream's, "No. I was joking."

He leaned back and laughed at Dream's shocked expression. Dream scowled and tackled him backwards on the bed. George laughed the entire time as Dream playfully whined, "But I wanna take a shower with you George! C'mon, *please* Georgie?"

"*No!* No means no Dream," George giggled out, teasing, and Dream laughed with him.

After they were done laughing Dream sighed in fake disappointment, "Maybe another time then."

"Maybe," George teased, his grin all teeth. Dream flashed him a dangerous look that sent heat straight to his groin but he ultimately got off George and stood up. Maybe he shouldn't tease Dream so much.

"You can shower first, I'm gonna clean up the dishes I used," Dream said as he grabbed the tray next to George.

"Okay..." George trailed off, sitting up in bed. Dream left the room and George already missed his company.

He paused and rolled his eyes at his thoughts. He wasn't so needy....

After they both showered and finished preparing for the day, Dream walked him halfway to the hospital so that he could check up on Phil and any other patients while Dream went to the castle to find Technoblade, wanting to get a head start on the whole Jack situation.

As soon as George entered the hospital, he wanted to laugh at the image of Wilbur almost dead on his feet, half asleep with his head on Phil's cot, his arm thrown over his dad. It was funny, but it was mainly cute.

"Hello George," Ponk greeted him, papers in his hands. He was smiling or at least George thought. It was sometimes hard to tell since Ponk wore that weird full-faced mask, "Can you re-wrap Phil's bandages with new ones for me? I'm trying to get these medical records updated."

"No problem," George smiled, a skip to his step as he walked to the back for fresh bandages before going to Philza's other side. Wilbur jostled awake and blinked when he saw George.

"Oh hey," Wilbur greeted sleepily, "What time is it?"

"About 9ish," George responded, unsure of the exact time. Wilbur nodded as he smacked the roof of his mouth with his tongue, "You had the first shift I take it?"

"Yeah," Wilbur laughed softly, glancing at Phil as George unwound all his bandages to check the burn wounds, "How's it looking?"

George grimaced at the burned skin, "Still inflamed but it'll look worse before it gets better."

Wilbur frowned and didn't comment. George applied new burn cream to Phil's wounds and then carefully wrapped the fresh bandages on. He then turned and discarded the used ones. The process took several minutes.

"Have you heard anything about Jack's village?" George questioned curiously, his stomach twisting in knots. Wilbur frowned, shaking his head.

"Not yet. Techno said something about how he sent a few of our men to investigate and they're supposed to send word of the situation by letter as soon as they know something..." Wilbur sighed out, "I don't know what he will do honestly. He's at the castle now meeting with some of the others."

"Ah," George scowled, hiding the sudden shakiness of his hands by washing them in a sink. He didn't like the idea of them going to Jack's village to confront the pillagers but he also knew it needed to be done. He couldn't shake his nightmare out of his head though.

George distracted himself from thinking of the situation by checking on some of the other sick or hurt patients on the other cots. He gave a healing potion to an older woman who seemed to have the flu.

Three hours passed and as he moved to take a new healing potion off a brewing stand in the back he heard Wilbur shout, "He's waking up!"

George jumped and ran into the main room again to see Wilbur and Ponk leaning over Phil, who was grimacing. Wilbur turned to George quickly, looking frantic, "Can you run to the castle and get Techno for me? And Tommy!"

Ponk gave him a nod and George needed no more prompting. He took off, sprinting out of the hospital and down a path. He almost hit a few people as he ran as fast as he could up another path that'd take him straight to the castle.

He was out of breath, his lungs burning by the time he made it to the castle entrance. George asked about the meeting room to the guards outside who immediately explained the location. George caught his breath before speeding into the castle and followed the directions of the guards to the meeting room.

George came upon a double spruce door and didn't even knock, he just pushed them open, panting heavily. Several people flinched or jumped at his sudden entrance. George noted that Sapnap, Dream, Techno, Eret, and Purpled occupied the room.

He didn't even get a word in because as soon as they registered him there, Dream literally leapt over the table to get to his side. Sapnap and Eret gaped at Dream, "What happened George?!"

George took in a deep breath and explained, "Phil is waking up!"

Techno froze, his eyes going wide beneath the mask before he turned to the others, "We're postponing this meeting."

He ran out of the room right after speaking those words. George shuffled to let him out before he looked at Dream, "Where's Tommy?"

"I'm not sure," Dream frowned, looking thoughtful, "Haven't seen him."

"He's in the yard right outside the castle with Tubbo I think," Purpled explained slowly and George sighed in relief. That wasn't as long of a walk.

"I need to go tell him," George said and Sapnap leaned off the wall as Dream nodded at him.

"I'll go with you," He replied and they all followed him out of the room. Purpled led them out of the castle and to the yard on the right side of the castle.

Sure enough Tommy was there sword fighting with Tubbo using wooden swords with Quackity and Ranboo watching/cheering. George immediately called out to the tall blonde, earning their attention, "Tommy!"

"Hello!" Tommy grinned eagerly when he saw them, "Come to watch me win guys?"

"Who says *you* were winning?" Tubbo pouted, rubbing a sore spot on his arm and Quackity laughed.

"Tommy, Phil is waking up!" George told the tall blonde boy, not wasting any time. Tommy blinked before his words registered. The sword dropped from his hands quickly.

"Oh....ah, right! Thanks!" Tommy called to him and took off in a run. Tubbo stared after him for a moment before running after him.

"We should go as well," Dream whispered to George and George nodded. He needed to get back just in case anyways. Ranboo and Quackity shared a look before following as well.

They all rushed back to the hospital and when they entered, George was pleasantly surprised to see Phil awake but softly talking to his sons crowding his bed and to Ponk as well. Ponk held an empty potion bottle.

George and the others crowded close as well without completely taking up all the space. Dream immediately spoke up, "How are you feeling, Phil?"

"Like toast," Phil joked but his smile fell when Techno grimaced, "Lighten up mates, I'm *fine*."

"*Don't* say you're fine," Wilbur scowled and even Tommy looked upset at his words. Phil sighed at them.

"I'll be fine you goofs; can't even feel it right now," Phil murmured, smiling gently. Some tension left Techno's body at that.

"I'm sorry this happened Phil," Dream sighed and Phil looked over at him with a frown.

"It's not your fault, mate," Phil replied and he looked thoughtful, "I thought that guy was a little weird but I never thought that explosion would happen."

"Did they fill you in too?" Quackity asked nervously and Phil nodded, his expression morphing into a serious one.

"Techno just finished filling me in," Phil retorted as he sent a smile Techno's way, " And I'm not surprised that they've taken to blackmailing a kid to get what they want."

Techno and Dream exchanged a look that was hard to see with their masks in the way. Quackity frowned, "Yeah I feel bad for him...."

"We'll figure out how to help him though don't worry," Purpled spoke up seriously, glancing from Quackity to Phil. Phil nodded.

"Wish I could help you guys out," Phil sighed, laying his head back on the pillows.

"There's no way you're leaving this bed until *I* say so," Ponk addressed immediately and Tommy grinned when Phil frowned.

"Don't worry Phil," George chuckled despite himself, "With a steady feeding of healing potions you won't be stuck for that long."

Phil seemed relieved at that and smiled at George, "Thanks mate. I heard from Ponk how you helped me as well."

George blushed at the sudden attention, "Uh, it was nothing r-really..."

Dream wrapped an arm around his waist and pulled him into his side, a proud look behind his mask. George felt his face burn and he looked at the ground while Sapnap laughed behind them. He debated shooting Sapnap a dirty look.

Phil smirked at them before turning to Techno again, "I heard you were in a meeting, mate. Sorry to interrupt you."

Techno rose an eyebrow at him, "Don't apologize."

"He dropped everything to make sure you were okay," Tommy grinned as if he didn't do the same and Techno glared at him. Wilbur chuckled while Phil just smiled.

"Ah, I see."

Techno seemed a bit embarrassed and turned to face everyone else, "Just to let you guys know, whether or not we receive news from the guys I sent out to Jack's village, we'll be heading there tomorrow."

"You will?" Eret frowned, concerned. George looked up at Dream with anxiousness. Dream looked down at him and smiled, pulling him even closer into his side. Flashes of his nightmare ran through his head.

"Yes," Techno nodded and ignored Phil's staring, "Me and a few others will leave. If there's any chance they're actually near Jack's village then I don't want them to escape."

"Preach," Sapnap snorted, crossing his arms as a faraway look entered his eyes. George looked at him worriedly but Sapnap didn't notice.

"That's probably ideal," Eret sighed and rubbed his head, "We can talk more about it later. I'm just glad Phil's okay."

"Me too!" Tubbo chirped and George blinked at the small boy.

Phil laughed, "Stop, you're making me blush! I'm glad you're all concerned about me, but I'm fine now and in good hands. You don't have to stay here."

"Well...." Quackity trailed off, a blank look to his face, "If you say so. I need to go check the raven house."

"See if there's anything for me while you're there Quackity," Techno ordered and Quackity gave a playful little salute before leaving.

"I might as well leave too. If you're leaving tomorrow I need to set some things up," Eret said and Techno nodded, looking grateful. Eret left after that.

"Um....glad you're okay Phil," Ranboo spoke up, twisting his fingers anxiously. Phil blinked but then smiled at the nervous boy.

"Thanks mate," Phil replied sincerely. It went a little silent and George looked up at Dream, surprised when he saw the daydreaming look on his face.

George looked up when Wilbur got up from the chair he was sitting in by Phil's side. Wilbur

wobbled and Tommy latched onto to him to keep him upright, "Wil?!"

"Sorry...." Wilbur sighed, closing his eyes and leaning on Tommy for a second while Techno and Phil looked at him in concern.

"Wilbur did you not sleep?" Techno asked with a scowl on his face. His scowl deepened when Wilbur shrugged.

"Get on that other cot *right* now," Phil demanded and George almost jumped. Tubbo outright laughed for some reason as Tommy pushed Wilbur into the cot beside Phil's.

"I could probably sleep for a whole *month*," Wilbur groaned and Techno rolled his eyes, throwing a blanket over him.

"I feel that sometimes," Sapnap spoke up and he was grinning. George chuckled softly.

"You're gonna be in a heap of trouble if you leave that cot, Wil," Phil warned and Tommy laughed at the look on Wilbur's face, "I'm *serious*."

Sapnap cleared his throat and grinned when everyone looked over at him, "Not that this isn't entertaining, but I'm gonna go find Puffy. See you dorks later."

"Who're you calling a dork?!" Tommy demanded but Sapnap just left the hospital laughing. Tubbo laughed at Tommy's expression.

"I think we're gonna leave as well," Dream chimed in and George blinked up at him. He was still holding George to his side.

"We are?" George questioned and Dream looked over at him, grinning as he nodded his head. George peeked at Ponk who simply nodded as well.

"There's not much happening here. I'll send for you if I need you George," Ponk smiled in a friendly manner.

"Well, alright," George replied and let Dream steer them out of the hospital to the sound of Wilbur teasing Tommy about something. As soon as they were out of the hospital George looked up at Dream, "So...what are we doing?"

Dream looked at him contemplatively, "Wanna go on a date with me?"

George blinked at the random question and then blushed a little. A date with Dream. An actual

date with Dream.... "Yes."

Dream's whole face lit up and George chuckled as he moved from Dream's side to hold his hand properly, "What will we be doing?"

"You'll see," Dream teased, interlacing their fingers and pulling George with him as they began walking.

Dream took him all the way to the bakery where Nikki worked at. When they entered to see several people at tables eating and Nikki baking various goods with a happy look on her face, George couldn't help but smile. She seemed so content.

Nikki noticed them almost as soon as they stepped through the door and beamed, "George! Dream! *Hello!* It feels like it's been months since I saw you guys!"

Dream wheezed and George laughed, "Hello Nikki."

Nikki studied them for a second as their laughs died down and then suddenly beamed, "Oh gosh, are you guys on a date?!"

"That's right," Dream smirked and George blushed a little, clenching Dream's hand when several people looked at them at that. Dream didn't give them the time of day so George decided to not look at them anymore either, "Can I buy everything from this list?"

George was floored when Dream pulled a folded up list out of his hoodie and handed it over to Nikki, who looked confused for a moment before brightening and nodding as she read it, "Sure! Give me one second to get those things for you."

"Wrap them up please," Dream asked and Nikki once again nodded, a warm smile on her face. George glanced at him.

"What? Is the food a secret too?" George teased and Dream smirked down at him.

"Yup," He began and George's smile fell in surprise, "At least until we get to where we're going."

"Oh...." George blinked and stared at him. Well, at least they weren't eating here with everyone staring at him. George didn't think he could handle that.

Several minutes later Nikki came out with a large basket covered by a blue plaid blanket. Dream handed her a bag of emeralds and she beamed at them, "Enjoy your date guys! You deserve it!"

"Thanks Nikki," Dream flashed her a grin and she waved at them as Dream pulled them out. George kept glancing at the basket and Dream's face, but it was hard to see his expression with his mask in the way.

He really wanted to ask Dream to take it off, but he knew Dream never did when they were out in public around others. He respected that. Still, it'd be nice to see his boyfriend's face. Dream was so expressive that it was cute.

"Where are we going?" George asked in confusion when Dream pulled him past the castle.

Dream hummed, "Away from the village. Don't worry, it's within the walls."

George relaxed and allowed Dream to pull him some more. He couldn't resist teasing Dream though, "Is our food going to get cold before we get there?"

"No," Dream laughed out and clenched his hand, "Be patient. We'll be there soon."

Dream was fidgeting with his other hand as they walked and George was surprised he didn't notice the brown bag over Dream's shoulder before. He must have been too distracted with other things. He was sure Dream didn't have that on in their house though, right?

George was so distracted looking at Dream that he didn't realize how far they'd walk until Dream stopped, "We're almost there. See that tree?"

He looked at where Dream was gesturing and saw a single tall birch tree on a hill. It was oddly beautiful. This tree's leaves were a red-orange and when the sun shone on it the leaves looked as if they were on fire.

Against his will George tensed thinking of fire. His nightmare. Dream glanced at him and smiled, unaware of what he was thinking, "There's more. C'mon."

He once again allowed Dream to pull him further away from the village and up the hill until they were standing in the shade of the tree. George blinked when Dream set down the basket and his bag on the ground before turning to him again.

"Look over the hill George," Dream grinned eagerly and George rose an eyebrow at him. He let go of Dream's hand and inched closer to the edge anxiously.

When he looked down, however, he was struck in awe. Behind the hill was a beautiful bubbling creak and with no other trees around, the sun shone on it directly making the surface of the water shine like gems in various places.

"Wow...." George trailed off and jumped when Dream was suddenly at his side, "It's beautiful...."

"I found this place a week ago and you don't know how hard it's been to keep my mouth shut about it," Dream laughed softly and looked at George, "I wanted to wait until I could take you out to show it to you."

George's throat clogged up and he glanced at Dream, stunned to see him with his mask off, "Your mask....you-"

"There's no one else around," Dream grinned out, "I can just put it on if we do see anyone anyways."

George smiled and silently admired the way the sun hit Dream's blonde hair, making it appear as golden as his eyes. He was caught up in his feelings and blurted, "You're beautiful."

Dream's eyes went large in surprise and George's face burned, "U-Umm, so the food right?!"

George wanted to sink into the ground out of embarrassment and Dream doubled over, wheezing painfully like he was dying. If he weren't so mortified by his own social ineptness he'd be laughing with Dream right now.

"Yeah, let's eat before it gets cold," Dream teased, snickering in a way that scrunched up his nose. That was cute.

George rolled his eyes and followed Dream back under the shade of the tree. He sat down beside Dream as he put the basket in front of them and uncovered it. George stiffened in surprise to see what was inside.

A small pie. It smelled like an apple pie. There were also two metal cannisters which confused George, "Dream....you got an apple pie?"

"Yup," Dream watched George's face as he brought out a spare plaid blanket and laid it over George before putting the other one on himself, "I realized I don't know what else you like to eat other than apple-flavored stuff."

George laughed, a happy feeling blooming inside him at Dream's consideration. Dream cut a piece of pie for the both of them and George looked over at him as they began eating, "What's in the cannisters?"

Dream brightened and he gave one to George, "Tea! Have you ever tried it before?"

George grimaced, "I tried making my own once but couldn't get it right..."

George hesitantly uncapped the cannister and took a sip. His eyes went wide and Dream laughed at him when he tasted the liquid inside. It was just the right amount of sweet without being too much and the coolness of it felt so refreshing, "Oh wow!"

"Yeah," Dream hummed in agreement. They ate silently for awhile until Dream looked over at him, "So....is there anything else you like eating?"

George smiled now that he finally asked and grinned, "Raisins, ever tried them?"

Dream grimaced this time and George laughed, "They're not my favorite..."

"Ever tried them with chocolate?" George smirked and Dream quirked an eyebrow at him, "It's *delicious*! I got to try it a few times but it's been a year or two since then."

Dream smiled, "Well good to know...."

"What about you?" George asked considerately. As far as he knew, Dream liked to eat most meats but he didn't really know what Dream liked best.

"I love banana pudding," Dream said easily and George blinked at him for the unexpected response, "My mom used to make it for me."

"Oh....that's nice," George replied, still slightly surprised. He wondered if he could learn how to make it. He'd never tried to make any kind of pudding before. Did he like bananas too? If so maybe he'd also like banana bread.

"Are you done eating?" Dream inquired gently after after a few more minutes and George nodded, helping him fold up the plaid blankets and stuff it back into the basket.

Afterwards he shifted to get comfortable and noticed Dream fidgeting again, an anxious look on his face. George frowned, "Dream?"

Dream looked over at him and George noticed he grabbed the brown bag that he had with him, "I have something for you...."

Is that why he looks so worried? George smiled hesitantly, "Oh....well what is it?"

Dream shuffled closer to him until their arms were touching and handed him the bag as if he

couldn't physically take out the present if he tried. George rose an eyebrow at him and ignored the way Dream's hands were shaking. Why was he so *worried*?

George opened the bag and froze. A pristine almost glowing pair of white glasses -or were they goggles?- laid inside with black oval lenses. George whirled up to look at Dream, who was staring at him nervously.

"I made those for you.....Antfrost and Bad helped," Dream explained and George suddenly remembered the gift Dream always claimed he was working on when they were traveling together. The bones and black glass he'd gotten so long ago.

"*Oh*...." George choked out and grabbed the glasses out of the bag.

"Before I left for work today I went to Bad and he.....he helped me enchant them," Dream stammered, blushing slightly as he continued to stare at George, "Color-correction enchantment...."

George's eyes went wide and looked over at Dream again, "Y-You mean...."

Dream nodded, smiling a little, "You should try them on..."

"I-I'm kind of nervous," George anxiously laughed and Dream placed a hand on his arm.

"Then just look at me," Dream said and then his eye widened, "Yeah! I'll be the *first* thing you see!"

George laughed at his excitement but his hands were shaking. He didn't know what to think or even what to say. Dream made him these glasses himself and they were enchanted to help him see colors the way Dream did?

"I don't know why I'm so scared," George shakily laughed.

"It's okay George. I'm right here," Dream replied softly and George's heart skipped several beats, "Just put them on....please?"

George's hands were still shaking as he hesitantly closed his eyes and put the glasses on his face. It felt foreign to have something covering his eyes but he knew he could eventually get used to it. Dream grabbed his arm and George sucked in a breath, slowly opening his eyes.

Dream was smiling patiently at him and George gasped at how much darker he looked, his clothes in particular. George blinked rapidly to adjust and Dream chuckled at him, "Is it any different?"

"*Is it*-" George echoed incredulously, "Yes! Oh my God....you're like....wait you're *definitely* darker!"

Dream wheezed, "That's green! Green is darker than yellow and you always saw yellow before!"

George studied him, absolutely stunned, "Yeah.....yeah wait...."

Dream continued laughing at him, wheezing sometimes, as he pushed the glasses up and down to study the difference. Dream paused when George grabbed his sleeve and got close, nearly in his lap, "Wait you're...you're *actually* green!"

"I....I am!" Dream stuttered at the proximity but George was still too amazed to notice.

George looked up into Dream's face and gasped again when he noticed that the all too familiar golden yellowish eyes were darker as well, almost matching the hoodie he wore, "Your eyes are green too!"

Dream wheezed again, snickering at him, "Yes, they are..."

George looked away from Dream and his mouth fell open when he noticed the darker color of the grass underneath him. Dream studied him with a smile on his face the entire time, patiently waiting as George took it all in.

George's gaze zeroed in on a dandelion and his eyes widened at the familiar yellow color. It was almost brighter with the glasses on though. George glanced at Dream and then back at the flower, tugging on Dream's sleeve, "Dream lay down next to the flower."

Dream chuckled, muttering something under his breath but shuffled away to lie on his side next to the flower, propping himself up on his elbow, his chin in his palm. George scooted closer and compared the colors, "Wow....this is *so* weird Dream..."

"I can imagine," Dream laughed out and George pushed his glasses up, smiling at Dream.

"This is amazing Dream! Thank you so much!" He exclaimed and launched himself at Dream in a hug. Dream let out an 'oof' as he fell over on his back.

"G-Glad it works and that you like it Georgie," Dream grinned, wrapping his arms around George's waist as George sat on top of him.

George couldn't believe it. He couldn't *believe* Dream made this for him but it made him incredibly happy; so happy he could cry. He looked down at where Dream was smiling up at him and leaned

down, pressing a kiss into Dream's mouth.

Dream seemed surprised at first but immediately began to reciprocate. The kisses started to become desperate on George's part, tears pricking his eyes as he thought about all Dream's done for him. Dream shuddered trying to kiss him back just as much.

George tried doing what Dream had done last time, biting at Dream's bottom lip. Dream groaned and George hesitantly put his tongue in, trying to mimic Dream's actions the last time they made out. Dream's hands flew up to grab at George's waist and George shifted to get more comfortable.

Their tongue wrestled for awhile as if they were fighting for dominance. George squeaked in surprise when one of Dream's hands went under his hoodie to caress his back. He relaxed and felt embarrassed when he pulled back and there was a string of saliva connecting their lips.

Dream brushed his lip against George's lips to disconnect it and George shivered at the heat in Dream's gaze. George thought about how happy Dream was when he sucked on George's neck and wondered if he'd be just as happy if George did the same to him. He was kind of curious to find out how he'd react to it.

He leaned down and pressed gentle kisses on Dream's throat. Dream gasped, "George...what...."

George bit down on Dream's neck and almost jumped at how loudly Dream moaned. Alright so he *really* liked that...did he enjoy being bitten that much? George tried to contain his grin as he sucked on the same spot until it became colored enough to stand out against his tan skin.

"George-" Dream was cut off by another moan when George licked and bit at another spot. He felt as if he didn't know what he was doing but Dream seemed to like it so he was probably doing something right.

"George *wait*," Dream breathed, both hands gripping his waist tightly again. George leaned back, raising an eyebrow at him, "You don't have to..."

"I'm just returning the marks that you gave me last time," George grinned as he moved the collar of his hoodie to show off the marks Dream put on him and Dream gulped, "Do you not want me to?"

It was seriously empowering, having this much power to fluster Dream; he was starting to understand why Dream liked to fluster him so much. Dream's eyes went wide and he shook his head almost immediately, making George laugh and duck back down to his neck. He smiled at the way Dream leaned his head back to give him more room instantly.

George teased him by scrapping his teeth against Dream's collarbone, remembering how Dream teased him the same way before. Dream jumped and bit back a moan. George felt his pants tighten but he continued kissing, licking, and biting above Dream's collarbone until the mark was finally

visible.

George leaned back and examined the three marks he'd made on Dream. The same amount Dream made on him. He was surprised and a bit worried to see Dream red in the face, his eyes closed, "Was it...are you okay Dream? Did I hurt you?"

Dream opened his mouth and sent him a look that was all heat and George swallowed heavily, "No, it definitely didn't hurt."

George blushed furiously, "Oh...."

He shuffled against Dream, about to get off him when he felt something stiff brush his thigh. George gasped and Dream stiffened, "Uh...shit, s-sorry...."

"It's alright," George whispered, getting off Dream to sit beside him, "Me too...I might have gotten too into it."

Dream huffed out a laugh and covered his eyes with his arm, "I'll say...I didn't expect the glasses to make you *that* excited."

George blushed, "Shut up, oh my God!"

He watched Dream touch the marks he made on his neck, "I think you pretty much mauled me."

"I did not, shut *up*!" George exclaimed, blushing even more at his teasing, "You liked it!"

"I sure did baby," Dream replied easily and they both froze at the nickname. George had the pleasure of watching Dream blush, like the full-faced burning blush that often plagued George himself. He looked like a deer caught in headlights, "Uh, I, that was... I was...."

"Dream it's okay," George laughed at him panicking over a nickname. He was surprised at first but he found he didn't mind, "I kind of liked it."

Dream blinked at him before he smirked, "You liked being called baby?"

"Maybee," George drawled and squealed playfully when Dream yanked him into his lap, his back against Dream's chest as Dream hugged him.

They settled down like that and George relaxed into Dream's arms, feeling content, "I love you Dream..."

Dream froze and George watched as a goofy smile spread across his boyfriend's face the way it always did when George said it. George rarely said it because it was embarrassing to him, "I love you so much, Georgie."

George gasped when Dream kissed the nape of his neck, sending a shiver down his spine. George whined, "Dream, *stop*. You're gonna get me worked up even more."

"Okay, okay," Dream laughed softly, squeezing him in the hug, "Maybe another time."

"Maybe," George teased just like he did earlier in the day and Dream groaned at the teasing.

"Let's go back before I do something to you," Dream growled and George laughed loudly, gasping through it as Dream playfully shoved him off and adjusted his hoodie to cover his problem.

George couldn't stop laughing the entire time they packed up and left, his new glasses on top of his head.

They made it back into the village and were just walking past the castle when they noticed a small group gathered in front of the castle entrance. It seemed to be Tubbo, Tommy, Ranboo, Quackity, Techno, Eret, Sapnap, and Purpled. What a group.

Sapnap noticed them as they got closer and grinned, "Oh *there* you guys are!"

"What's going on?" Dream asked, the mask back on his face but it was still visible when he rose an eyebrow.

Sapnap's grin turned into a smirk as he whistled, "Not much really, not as much as what's going on with you two apparently."

George and Dream exchanged a confused look until they realized the collar of Dream's hoodie was ruffled and showing a couple of the marks George put on him. George blushed instantly.

"Damn, I didn't think George had it in him," Sapnap teased and he look at George's glasses contemplatively.

"Oh he *does*," Dream muttered and Sapnap laughed loudly at that.

George groaned, shaking his head as the others seemed to notice what was going on and came closer.

"Whoa George were you trying to eat him?" Tubbo teased as he noticed the marks and George choked, stunned at his words.

"*Tubbo!*"

"Oh my God!" Tommy laughed alongside Ranboo, "Tubbo!"

"Why am I the only one not having any fun?" Eret complained and Techno looked at him in shock. This made Dream, Sapnap, and Tommy laugh hysterically.

Purpled grinned toothily, "At least now we know what they were doing. Nice glasses by the way."

George turned red at the implication, "Oh my God, *stop!* We weren't doing *that!*"

Dream wheezed, tugging George into his side. They continued teasing the pair and Dream eventually took mercy on George, "Alright guys, lay off."

"So why are guys all gathered out here?" George asked, desperately trying to change the subject.

Techno actually chuckled, "It was just me and Eret at first discussing tomorrow's plans but Tommy and the other two followed us."

"Other two?" Tubbo retorted, sounding offended. Ranboo just shrugged it off.

"And you?" Dream asked Sapnap and Quackity, who both grinned.

"We were looking for you two," Quackity said slyly and George glared at him, internally begging for no more teasing.

"Why were you looking for us?"

Before they could answer, someone started yelling in the distance. Everyone turned almost in sync and saw Karl running up to them with a worried look on his face as he called for Technoblade.

As soon as Karl was close Techno frowned at him, "What is it Karl?"

"At....at the gate," Karl said, struggling to breathe. Sapnap and Quackity pressed in close to help him when it looked like the poor guy's knees were shaking. George and Dream exchanged a worried look.

"What's at the gate?" Eret asked tensely.

"A group of survivors from Jack's village," Karl explained after catching his breath and Ranboo gasped.

"They were attacked *today*?" He gasped out, "Why?!"

"What about the people I sent over?!" Techno demanded, looking both shocked and angry. George was stunned.

"They're with the survivors," Karl said hesitantly, like he was hiding something, "We were too late to stop the attack apparently but they escorted the survivors here."

"What about Jack's parents?!" Dream asked in horror and George felt his heart stop in his chest.

"They're alive. They're in the group too," Karl added and Dream looked relieved at that. Sapnap did too.

"I can't believe we were too late to stop it. *How*?" Tommy gritted his teeth and Tubbo looked similarly angry.

"They must have either decided to uphold their threat anyway," Eret scowled and Dream nodded, "They didn't even wait for Jack's confirmation that he did his part or anything."

"They don't *care*," Techno retorted flatly before looking at a nervous Karl, "You look like you're hiding something. What is it Karl?"

"There's one other person with them. The survivors said that he helped them but your people have him in restraints," Karl licked his lips as he explained this nervously.

George felt confused at that and Quackity looked just as confused, "Who is it?"

Karl glanced at Techno hesitantly, "He said his name was Schlatt and he has information for you."

Techno and Eret's eyes both widened and Dream stiffened at his side. George looked confused before realizing that all three of them *and* Purpled looked at Tubbo instantly.

Tubbo's eyes went wide and George was left wondering why Tommy looked so wary. Ranboo stiffened, "He's *here*?"

"What should we do?" Purpled asked, looking at Techno.

Techno sighed, closing his eyes, "Let him and the survivors in. Looks like we have a lot to talk about."

Chapter End Notes

I was seriously grateful for those of you that assured me that the spicy scenes in last chapter were well written. I hope the same can be said for this one. George is slowly getting bolder as he gets more comfortable being physical with Dream. Do I sense a future power bottom George? 🤔

Anyways, I'd love to hear what you guys thought about this chapter and as usual I could use any advice you guys see fit with the way I write! I'm all for improvement!
😊

Chapter 26

Chapter Summary

No one understands what Schlatt's thinking, Techno and others begin to plan, and Dream reassures George.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Sorry for the prolonged absence, but I had many things come up that I had to deal with; the whole month seemed to go by in a blur. I'm back now though and glad for it! 😊

Anyways, in my absence I see that the story's gotten 900 kudos and 200 bookmarks which is absolutely insane and flattering! Thank you all so much for all the support! Glad you're enjoying it!

I sincerely hope you've all been doing well and had a good month!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream leaned against the wall, tapping his foot impatiently. George was by his side, sandwiched in the middle of him and Sapnap. George had this blank dazed look on his face that spoke to how far in his thoughts he was. Sapnap had his eyes glued to the double doors of the castle's biggest meeting room, where they were all currently waiting for Schlatt to be brought in.

Dream's eyes traveled to Tubbo where he stood at the meeting table with Tommy, Ranboo, and Purpled. Tubbo caught his eye and smiled, making Dream wonder how he was so calm when Tommy looked battle ready at his side. Purpled and Ranboo seemed just as ready for action, watching the doors with the same look Sapnap had on his face.

Near the doors stood Techno and Eret, both looked agitated at the thought of having to talk with Schlatt. Karl was close to them in the corner, shifting around awkwardly at the negative energy in the air with Quackity standing by his side, a neutral expression on his face.

Karl spoke up anxiously, wringing his hands, "So...is this guy like super dangerous or something?"

Techno's eyes flashed, "In a lot of ways, yes. He's the craftiest person I know."

"Long story short, he used to be a part of our community until he wanted more power and tried to kill me and Techno so that he could take over," Eret explained and Dream glanced over when Sapnap and George froze, their eyes going wide.

Karl and Quackity looked absolutely stunned and Dream glanced at Tubbo again, frowning when he saw the little blonde staring absently at the table. Tommy scoffed, "Yeah and you just *know* he's not giving this information out for free."

"Right," Techno scowled, peeking over his shoulder at him, "I'll handle it."

Tommy frowned deeper, muttering under his breath and he shifted endlessly by Tubbo's side. Dream looked down again when he felt George grab his hand.

"You knew about Schlatt?" He whispered, looking up at him and Dream noticed Sapnap staring at him with an eyebrow raised.

"Techno and Phil told me a bit about him before we left for here," Dream explained and George frowned, glancing around the room.

"Okay but what's up with Tubbo? Why does everyone including you keep looking over at him?" George asked quietly, a worried look forming on his face.

Dream sighed, ducking down to whisper to them both so that no one accidentally overheard anything, "Schlatt was his legal guardian when he still lived here."

George blinked rapidly in shock and Sapnap's eye widened, "Holy shit, you mean like his dad or something?"

Dream shrugged, "Yeah. I'm not sure what their relationship is like though..."

"Damn," Sapnap gritted his teeth and flicked his eyes at Tubbo and Tommy with sudden understanding in his eyes.

Techno looked over at them then and Dream hastily leaned away from George and Sapnap. Techno rose an eyebrow and looked ready to say something to him until there was a knock on the double doors.

Everyone tensed immediately and Techno beckoned for the people at the door to enter. Dream kept his eyes glued to the door and narrowed his gaze in on the individual surrounded by armed warriors.

The man himself was taller than Sapnap or George but not taller than Dream or Wilbur. He had dark brown hair that basically looked black and matching dark brown eyes that gave his handsome face a dark look. He also had a bit of stubble. Dream imagined some of the others would find him intimidating though he didn't himself.

Dream's eyes trailed down to where handcuffs restricted Schlatt's hands and then realized that, for whatever reason, Schlatt was wearing a black suit. Why do so many people he meets like to wear formal clothing?

Schlatt immediately looked around the room upon entering and his eyes widened when he caught Dream's stare but he was quick to move on and stare at Ranboo. Dream caught the tense line of Schlatt's shoulders as if he were wary. Well, he *should* be.

"Schlatt, it's hard to believe you dared to enter our borders without permission," Eret scowled, a withheld hostile look to his eyes as he stared upon the taller man.

Dream watched as Schlatt studied Ranboo for another moment before flicking his gaze to Tubbo, "Well, Eret, it was important. I guess if you don't want to hear what I have to say then I'll leave?"

"Quit with the dramatics," Techno said lowly, almost monotone and Schlatt turned his head halfway to look at Techno with a smirk, "What's so important that you broke our contract to stay away from the village?"

Schlatt looked around the room again and Dream grabbed George's hand again when George pressed closer to him. Dream didn't look away though, keeping his eyes trained on Schlatt.

Then, surprisingly, Schlatt flat out ignored Techno and turned to Tubbo again, shocking everyone in the room when he causally began speaking, "Tubbo! You look like you've been good so I'm glad."

Tubbo blinked at him, just as surprised as everyone else, yet his body posture remained wary, "Yeah....thank you Schlatt."

"Are you going to continue to be immature and ignore Techno or will you just talk already?" Tommy asked through gritted teeth, glaring at Schlatt.

Schlatt grinned, obviously amused at him, "I will in good time. I just want to talk to my son, why is that immature?"

"You're just stalling because you want to rile them up," Sapnap spoke up and Dream briefly flicked his eyes at him, noticing Sapnap's glare.

Schlatt looked over at them and frowned, "And you are?"

"I'm Sapnap," Sapnap announced and then followed Schlatt's eyes to where he was looking at Dream and how he practically hid George from Schlatt's view, "That's Dream and George. Now

just spit it out. What did you have to say?"

Schlatt met Dream's eyes and an unreadable look passed through his gaze that made Dream raise an eyebrow, "That's a mighty rude way to introduce yourself Sapnap. And what? Your friends need you to talk for them?"

Dream snarled while George and Sapnap bristled, glaring at him. Techno growled out a warning deep in his chest while Karl and Quackity exchanged a worried look, "Schlatt...."

"Sorry, sorry," Schlatt laughed, holding up his cuffed hands and Eret sighed loudly.

"Schlatt, can't you just tell us what you wanted us to know?" Tubbo asked, crossing his arms and frowning up at the taller man. Schlatt paused and glanced at Tubbo.

"Alright," Schlatt nodded immediately and Dream rolled his eyes behind his mask, "I know where the pillagers' main base is."

Gasps and sharp inhales resounded around the room while Dream's mouth unwilling parted in shock at the unexpected statement. Tubbo's eyes widened as Tommy and Ranboo exchanged a surprised look.

"Wait, *what*?" Karl gasped out, completely stunned at what he just heard.

"How do you even *know* about the pillagers?!" Techno demanded slowly, his stance suddenly turning hostile. This set Dream on edge and he tensed, ready for anything to happen. George tugged on his hand worriedly.

"That's because I want to know everything going on in the town my son lives in," Schlatt shrugged innocently, giving nothing away in his expression. Tubbo rose an eyebrow, looking almost skeptical.

"Yeah *right* Schlatt," Purpled sneered, glaring at him, "You've been spying on us haven't you? Glad to see nothing's changed with you."

"If I wanted to harm you all then I would have," Schlatt commented, his eyes seriously for a split second. Dream glanced at Techno warily; he hadn't denied Purpled exactly.

"Schlatt I'll ask you one last time. How do you know about all this?" Techno asked calmly, eyes never moving from Schlatt.

"I did my own research about the pillagers when I learned you sent Tubbo and your brother in the

nether on a rescue mission," Schlatt explained and Dream felt that at least *that* much was honest, "I wanted to know what you were putting him through."

"What *I* was putting him through?" Techno scoffed, smirking a little but said nothing further. Schlatt narrowed his eyes and Tubbo shuffled awkwardly. Ranboo sent him a sympathetic look, "Then exactly how did you research about the pillagers?"

"I don't reveal my sources," Schlatt said easily but paused when Techno snarled at him, his hostility increasing. Karl and Quackity backed away and Ranboo look intensely uncomfortable with being in the room. Dream felt George squeeze his hand.

"Then am I to take that to mean you have an inside man here?" Eret asked harshly and Purpled glared at Schlatt.

"I didn't say that. I'm not spying on you," Schlatt shrugged, as easygoing as ever, like he wasn't worried about what Techno would do in the slightest.

"I don't trust a word he says," Tommy scowled and Schlatt looked over at him with a frown.

"Then you are as close-minded as the rest of your family," Schlatt commented and Tommy bristled while Techno looked ready to calmly slice Schlatt up.

"*Schlatt!*" Tubbo glared at him and Schlatt blinked over at him, "They're mad because you're playing around right now! And it's hard to trust you after what you did last time!"

"You're right but like I said, if I wanted to hurt anyone then I could have done so already. I also could have not come to you guys with this information," Schlatt replied, staring down at Tubbo seriously. Techno and Eret seemed to be calming down slightly at his words.

"Then if you've done research do you know what the pillagers are up to?" Tubbo asked just as seriously and everyone, including Dream, watched the two interact silently.

Schlatt smiled slightly, "Of course. I learned that they're planning on trying to get to the End. They want to release the Ender Dragon into the Overworld because they foolishly think they can control it. They think they have a ritual that'll work in bringing it here. They just want power over the Overworld. "

"Sounds like someone I know," Tommy muttered and Schlatt sent a glare his way.

"So the rumors *are* true," Dream said aloud before thinking. Techno glanced at him and sighed.

"If he's telling the truth then yes. I always thought the rumors were true anyway," Techno commented and put his hands on his hips.

"They want to kill Dream after what he did in the nether," Schlatt continued out of nowhere and Dream tensed up at hearing his name. He felt a squeeze in his hand. How did he even know that exactly?

"It wasn't just Dream that did anything!" Sapnap argued, sounding annoyed, "Why are they so hellbent on targeting just him?"

"Well I assume they'll target more of you soon," Schlatt replied easily, making Tommy, Techno, and Eret glare at him in suspicion.

"How do you know that?" Tommy asked angrily, his eyes narrowed, "I bet you are *with* the pillagers!"

"I can only take so much of your stupidity, boy!" Schlatt growled out and Tubbo tensed, his eyes going slightly wide, "If you weren't friends with Tubbo...."

"What would you do? I *dare* you to say it." Techno sneered, completely serious. Purpled put a hand on the sword he had on his hip. Dream's fingers twitched.

"W-Why don't we all calm down here?" Karl spoke up from the corner, looking absolutely terrified alongside Quackity.

"Fine," Schlatt sighed, leaning back. He glanced at Techno, "Overall, I think you should plan for an assault on the base soon. I could-"

"Why should I listen to any plan of *yours*?" Techno asked, a glint in his eyes.

"I don't trust him either," Dream said easily, narrowing his eyes at Schlatt's expression, "He's withholding too much information."

"*Thank* you!" Eret raised a hand, gesturing to him gratefully. Schlatt glanced at Dream again, that same unreadable look in his eyes.

"I think we should listen to him and take him serious, at least a little bit," Quackity piped up and almost everyone turned to him in disbelief, "He's got the right idea about attacking the base *if* he's telling the truth."

Schlatt seemed just as surprised as everyone but he smirked at Quackity, "Glad to know some

people can get past personal feelings and think logically."

"Schlatt...." Tubbo warned and Schlatt grinned at him apologetically.

"Okay, I can see the idea of it being good....but for all we know he could be laying a trap for us," Sapnap explained and Quackity frowned at him, "I'm with Dream and Techno on this one."

"Yeah there is a level of uncertainty here," George said slowly and Dream smiled over at him, "His motives are unclear."

"Also, it just occurred to me to ask," Purpled turned to Schlatt suspiciously, "But what were you doing close to Jack's village when it got attacked anyways? They said you helped but..."

If Schlatt were nervous about anything, he gave nothing away, even when everyone stared at him. He spoke just as easily as he had so far, "I was already on my way here to give the information I have when I came across the village under attack. I decided to help them."

"Sure you did," Tommy rolled his eyes, crossing his arms, "I'm also so sure you just happened across there."

Schlatt ignored Tommy altogether as he spoke to the group, "Believe me or not but that's how it was."

Techno rubbed between his eyes, "Okay, fine. I'll accept that for *now*."

"Also, that hybrid...." Schlatt glanced at Ranboo, who tensed immediately, "Endermen hybrid right? If he used his powers to help with the attack then it'd-"

"*No!*" Tubbo shouted and Schlatt jumped along with several others. Dream's eyes widened at how pissed Tubbo suddenly was. He shoved his arm in front of Tommy and Ranboo like he meant to shield his friends from a physical blow, "Absolutely *not!* He's my best friend, not some tool for you to use!"

Schlatt's eyes widened and he actually looked stunned. Ranboo looked over at Tubbo in shock while Tommy grinned toothily, "Well you heard him!"

"I didn't mean to make it sound like he'd be *used*. Just that he could help if he wanted to," Schlatt glanced at Tubbo and Dream was stunned to see the taller man look like he was trying to appease Tubbo; as if he didn't want the small blonde to be angry with him, "I didn't know he was a friend of yours?"

"I *like* him. He's interesting," Tubbo claimed and Tommy covered his mouth, almost spitting as he suddenly laughed while Ranboo blushed, his eyes going wider. He looked anywhere but at someone.

Dream blinked when George began laughing behind his other hand.

"*Anyways*," Techno sighed, looking like a tired parent supervising a playdate, "*We'll* be the ones making the plans here. Not you."

Schlatt said nothing and glanced at Tubbo, Tommy, and Ranboo again in the corner of his eye. George and Sapnap both jumped at his side when the doors of the meeting room suddenly thrust open.

Dream was shocked to see Phil in all his bandages standing there panting, an unsettling look in his eyes as they pinned on Schlatt's figure immediately. Wilbur was behind Phil looking wary.

"Phil!" Techno gasped out, "What the hell are you doing out of bed?!"

"There was *no* way I'm not keeping my eyes on him this time," Phil ground out as he and Wilbur walked further in the room. Schlatt smirked and Dream narrowed his eyes at him. Then it occurred to him that Schlatt wasn't smirking at *Philza*.

"Wilbur, so good to see you again!" Schlatt cheered and Wilbur rolled his eyes, a look of disgust on his face.

"Wish I could say the same Schlatt. What are you up to this time?" Wilbur replied while Dream shared a confused look with Sapnap and George.

"Nothing at all! I decided to give you guys a heads up on some helpful information that's all!" Schlatt answered with the same smirk.

"For free?" Phil pressed, his eyes narrowing further. Schlatt glanced at him.

"What makes you think it's not for free?" Schlatt questioned, his smirk widening.

"You're seriously asking that?" Techno scowled and Dream decided then that Techno was too riled up to move things along.

"Let's just get Phil and Wilbur up to speed since they're here," Dream spoke up and Techno blinked over at him. Wilbur and Phil gave him their undivided attention and he covered everything that happened since Schlatt arrived.

"Schlatt, you really expect us to believe you are handing us this useful information out of the goodness of your heart?" Wilbur asked with a sneer on his face.

Schlatt just smiled, "Well, yes. I don't know how many times I have to say this and mean it. I would have already done something if I wanted to hurt any of you."

"Doesn't mean you don't have something planned," Ranboo said lowly, shifting when Schlatt looked over at him.

"Then let me put it this way. I'm helping so that nothing happens to this place or to you all," Schlatt shrugged and Purpled looked at him in disbelief, "I don't personally care for any of you, but Tubbo does and I don't want him caught up in this."

Tubbo looked caught off guard, his blue eyes round, "Huh?"

"Still caught up in the good father act huh?" Philza retorted sounding much crueler than Dream ever thought he could. He must *really* hate Schlatt.

Everyone in the room tensed or froze when Schlatt growled, actually glaring at Philza, "Say what you want about me but it's *not* an act. God forbid the terrible J. Schlatt has *one* thing he cares about!"

Phil and Techno's eyes widened, like they obviously weren't expecting that. Dream saw the awkwardness in the air. Tommy rose an eyebrow, "Okay, that was just weird, right Tubbo?"

"I-I guess?" Tubbo blinked at his friend, looking embarrassed and awkward, "So, um, what should we do now?"

Dream decided to speak up before anything more started, "I think we should check out his information once he tells us where the base is. It's not like we can't scout out the place to see if he's telling the truth."

"And if it's a trap?" Karl asked nervously.

"Then we'll deal with it then. How about that?" Dream asked, looking at Techno. He was afraid he'd overstepped a bit, but with all the drama going on nothing seemed to be moving along.

Techno actually looked a bit grateful beyond that passive look that was ever present on his face, "That sounds like a plan but we won't be impatient with this just in case he's working with the pillagers."

Schlatt thankfully stayed silent as they continued to talk about possible plans. Techno, Phil, and Purpled agreed that the only thing they should do now is stake out the location once Schlatt gives it and restrain Schlatt to the prison for the time being.

This caught the taller man's attention, "I'm already restrained-"

"You aren't being let loose in our village," Phil warned, glaring at him. Schlatt scoffed but said nothing, his hands curling into fists again.

"Can I say something?" Quackity spoke up and everyone turned to him in surprise. He seemed a bit nervous, "I'm glad we're deciding to at least try to take his word seriously....but I want to ask Schlatt if there's anything else we should know about the pillagers based on his 'research'?"

Schlatt kept his face neutral so Dream couldn't tell if he was lying when he calmly said, "No, I've told you everything I know. I only really knew about their location and a bit about what they meant to do."

"Let's just do as you said Techno," Wilbur advised with a small smile as he turned to his pink-haired brother, "Let's go ahead and plan to find the pillager's base and watch slowly, gathering our *own* intel."

Techno nodded seriously and turned to the kids, "Tommy, take Tubbo and Ranboo to the prison and release Jack so that he can be with his family."

All three kids brightened like they forgot all about that and Tommy nodded, turning to the other two, "Let's go!"

"I'll see you later Tubbo," Schlatt commented suddenly, making everyone else other than Dream and his friends glare at him. Tubbo stared at Schlatt but surprisingly nodded, looking undeterred.

"Fine but don't make anymore trouble for anyone," Tubbo replied in an almost scolding tone and Dream watched Schlatt look at him in amusement. They have to have the *weirdest* dynamic Dream's ever seen.

Tommy glared at Schlatt while almost pushing Tubbo out the door with Ranboo trailing behind them, not even giving Schlatt a glance. Once they left Techno turned to Phil, "Wilbur take Phil back to the hospital."

Phil looked ready to argue until Wilbur said, "Leave Schlatt to Techno and Eret. They'll take him to the prison."

"Fine," Phil sighed in resignation after Eret gave a reassuring nod to him.

Schlatt smirked, waving one of his hands, "Don't miss me too much Wilbur."

"Drop dead, Schlatt," Wilbur frowned and Dream rose an eyebrow. Schlatt acted differently only towards Tubbo and Wilbur. Tubbo he understood but was he actually *flirting* with Wilbur?

Dream glanced at Sapnap to see an equally confused expression on his best friend's face. He looked back when Wilbur led Phil out of the room.

"Quackity," Techno called out and Quackity jumped, "You're coming with me and Eret. You'll help get information out of him and watch over Schlatt."

"Why *me*?" Quackity asked as he blinked. Karl seemed even more nervous now.

"You're a fresh face and you'll get along better with him than most of us," Techno sighed, ignoring when Schlatt chuckled, "Plus you were levelheaded and thinking logically while he did his shit. I need your help. Plus it won't just be *you*."

"O-Okay, thanks," Quackity nodded, looking stunned at his words.

"Dream, thanks for earlier," Techno said vaguely though Dream knew he was referring to taking charge when Techno couldn't. Dream nodded seriously, "I'll keep you and Sapnap posted since I'll eventually need your help."

"Alright," Dream replied, staring back at Schlatt when the other decided to stare him down for whatever reason.

Techno, Eret, and Quackity led Schlatt out of the room with several guards forming behind them once they were out of the room. Purpled eventually followed after them.

Dream turned to George and was surprised to see that dazed thoughtful look on his face, "George?"

"Huh?" George blinked out of his daze and looked up at Dream, "Oh, I'm fine."

"That Schlatt guy is so *annoying*," Sapnap groaned and Karl joined them from the other side of the room, "It's like everything's a joke to him!"

"It was almost interesting to watch but I hear you," Karl commented and George frowned, "I've never seen Techno so riled up."

"Schlatt had this look on his face...." George trailed off and Dream wondered what he meant when Schlatt gave nothing away in his expressions most of the time when Dream watched him, which was pretty much the entire time.

"What do you mean?" Karl inquired intently, raising an eyebrow.

"When Quackity asked him if there were anything else we needed to know about the pillagers, he had this *look* on his face," George stared at the ground, "I don't know how to describe it."

"You think he's hiding something?" Dream asked, squeezing George's hand in his own, ignoring how sweaty their hands due to holding them for so long.

George nodded hesitantly, "I think Techno and his family are right, that there's something he's purposefully not saying."

"We should tell Techno," Karl frowned worriedly.

"But it's confusing because he was telling the truth about not hurting anyone because he cares about Tubbo," George added and Dream looked at Sapnap, sharing a look with him.

"How do you know he was telling the truth about that and not just acting?" Sapnap questioned seriously.

"He was playful or teasing throughout the whole meeting but was dead serious whenever he talked about or to Tubbo," George explained and Sapnap nodded slowly.

"Yeah....it's just hard to believe a guy like him cares I guess," Sapnap sighed while Karl nodded in agreement.

Dream thought back on Tubbo's reaction to Schlatt's words. He seemed just as surprised to hear them and almost embarrassed, like he didn't know Schlatt felt that way or just wasn't used to hearing it out loud, "I believe he cares for Tubbo but I *also* believe he can't be trusted and that he's hiding something."

"So what should we do now?" Karl asked, glancing at the door.

"Techno already thinks he's hiding something so we don't have to tell him that," Dream shrugged and then thought of something, "Just in case, we shouldn't go anywhere alone."

"Probably smart," Sapnap nodded and looked at Karl teasingly, "Guess you're stuck with me!"

Karl smirked just as teasingly, "Yeah because there's no separating the lovers, especially *now*."

George rolled his eyes and Dream chuckled at them.

After they finally decided to leave the castle, Sapnap escorted Karl home since they lived next to each other. George asked Dream to walk with him as soon as they were out of the castle, so they broke off from the other pair and walked along various paths alone.

Dream glanced down at George, seeing that glazed look in his eyes again, "Whatcha thinkin' so hard about?"

George jumped and looked up at Dream, startled, "Oh, uh....I'm just kind of freaked out I guess. That Schlatt guy is intimidating and I didn't like the way he looked at you let alone the others."

Dream thought back on the way Schlatt stared at him. It wasn't anything he hadn't experienced before. Dream was used to people staring at him for one reason or the other, "Maybe it was just the mask?"

"Maybe," George hummed but still looked unconvinced. Dream hated to see him worried, "I just have a bad feeling about him and don't really know why."

"Well you don't have to worry, Georgie," Dream smiled, quickly hooking his arm through one of George's, who blinked in surprise. Dream grabbed his hand as well, "I promise I won't let anything happen if he's up to something."

George smiled and it looked so fond that Dream suddenly felt a bit embarrassed. He looked away and down at the trail they were taking. They'd just started walking down any path, not really caring where they were heading.

"Thanks Dream," George grinned, moving his fingers in Dream's hand to hold it properly. Dream smiled to himself.

They walked quietly for a couple of minutes and Dream looked over at him when George started adjusting the glasses on top of his head. It made Dream extremely happy that George liked them so much. He blushed when he remembered what George did to show him how happy he was.

Not the time nor the place for dirty thoughts. Dream sighed and George glanced at him, raising an eyebrow, trying to see past his mask, "What's wrong?"

"Oh nothing," Dream replied quickly, smiling. George narrowed his eyes at him but said nothing about it.

George looked down thoughtfully and flicked his brown eyes back up at Dream before Dream could even process his expression, "You're gonna go on the mission right?"

Dream blinked, startled by the randomness of the question until it occurred to him what George meant, "Oh! Yeah, of course I will."

The edges of George's mouth fell further and Dream frowned, knowing he was worried but unable to think of anything to say to him. George sighed, looking sad, "A part of me *wants* you to fight them and another part of me is so worried you're gonna get hurt or killed."

"I wouldn't-"

"You *could* though," George stressed, interrupting him and stopping them from walking any further. There was so much serious emotion in his eyes that it stunned Dream, "*Anyone* can be overwhelmed in battle and anyone can be killed. I'm not saying you're weak I'm just saying it's possible...that's what scares me."

"George...." Dream was speechless. Dream didn't spend too much time thinking about the possibility of losing. He never did because to him it wasn't an option but George seemed to think more long-term and more logically than him.

"They understand that you're seriously strong which is why they're targeting you," George said looking distressed before he swallowed heavily, "I guess my nightmare is still bothering me."

Dream moved his arm and gently pulled George into an embrace. He pressed his face on the top of George's head, "Sorry, baby. I wish I knew something better to say. Um, I'm pretty talented at getting myself out of dangerous situations?"

George laughed softly, almost shaking his head but wrapped his arms around Dream's waist. He ran his hands up his back and held onto his shoulders best he could, just enjoying the warm embrace, "I know..."

"Sapnap will be with me," Dream added and George paused, "So will Technoblade and from what I hear he's never lost a fight nor does he ever die."

"I heard that too," George snorted but smiled into Dream's chest, slowly feeling a bit better. He knew many talented people would be up in arms to join Techno and that did make him feel better.

Dream pulled back a little and grinned when he saw George smiling. He felt better knowing George wasn't as upset. He leaned down and pressed his lips on the bridge of George's nose, giving it a long kiss.

George seemed startled but then playfully winked his nose at him, laughing, "Weirdo..."

"How am I weird?" Dream grinned toothily and George said nothing, "See? You're just shy, baby."

"Shut up," George pouted, turned red just like Dream expected. He still didn't seem used to the new nickname which is one reason Dream loved using it.

Then Dream saw something in the corner of his eye and leaned back quickly. George jumped at his sudden movement but also looked. They were both surprised to see the lone figure of Ranboo walking down the path, staring at the ground blankly.

"Ranboo?" George called out and Ranboo flinched, looking up at them in surprise, "You okay?"

"Oh, uh, yes," Ranboo smiled hesitantly and Dream cocked his head at him, which didn't go unnoticed, "Um, are you guys on a date?"

"No but we went on a *fantastic* one earlier," Dream smirked when George turned even more red and gaped at him. Ranboo just blinked because he didn't get the hidden meaning.

"Oh, that's cool," Ranboo commented, shifting like he didn't know what to do with himself.

"Why are you alone? Weren't you just with Tubbo and Tommy?" Dream asked seriously and Ranboo flicked his bi-colored eyes to the side.

"Yes, they're still with him. I...felt out of place," Ranboo frowned and wrapped his arms around himself, "Tubbo tried to get me to stay but I just needed space."

George, now calmed down, nodded sympathetically, "Makes sense."

Ranboo glanced at them and then back at the ground, "Am...I a coward?"

That caught them both off guard, "What?"

"Am I a coward?" Ranboo repeated a bit louder, looking upset, "For not wanting to use my powers against the pillagers? For....being scared to help?"

"Of *course* not," George scowled and Ranboo looked at him silently, "They're *your* powers and you don't even fully understand them yet. It makes sense to be scared about it."

"I agree," Dream nodded intently, "And no offense but you're just a kid! You shouldn't have to be worried about any of this. Don't listen to Schlatt, he just doesn't get it."

"Yeah, he probably doesn't know my age," Ranboo commented, a light coming to his eyes, "I don't know...I just started feeling bad about it."

"Well you don't have to," George smiled encouragingly, "So, how is Jack doing?"

Ranboo and Dream both paused at the subject change but Ranboo smiled slightly, "He cried seeing his parents alive and safe. He was upset about his village and shocked when Tommy told them they'd live here now. Tommy looked just like Phil when he explained it."

"That's funny," Dream grinned and George rolled his eyes at him.

"And then, um, Jack and Tommy really started to hit it off, talking about the village and jobs and all that...." Ranboo trailed off, "I decided to leave after that."

"Oh then how's Tubbo holding up so far?" Dream questioned intently and Ranboo actually smiled again.

"You wouldn't think anything was wrong with him," Ranboo explained, "Of course, I know better. He's a little worried about Schlatt and confused because he says he doesn't know what goes on in Schlatt's mind."

"I'd be pretty confused too," George sighed, shaking his head, "But at least Schlatt is kind to him."

Ranboo made a face that had Dream chuckling, "Yes...he's a weird parent."

"What are you going to do now?" Dream inquired slowly, looking past Ranboo at the sun which was almost ready to start setting.

Ranboo went quiet, "I was actually on my way to see Bad."

"Bad?" Dream and George parroted at the same time. Ranboo nodded silently.

"I wanted to see if there were any books on hybrids," He said nervously and Dream blinked at him. He hadn't thought about that before.

"Oh," George gasped, "That's actually a good idea!"

Ranboo smiled, "Yeah, I didn't think of it until now. There might not be any records though."

"It was weird that Schlatt didn't question what you were, no offense," Dream started, thinking back on it, "He immediately referred to you as a hybrid."

"Tubbo thought that was weird too. He brought it up to me which made me think there might be records or stories about other hybrids," Ranboo replied nonchalantly but there was a type of hope to his eyes.

"Well good luck!" George smiled and Ranboo smiled back, "If you need any help then let me know!"

"Thank you. Enjoy y-your....um have a good night," Ranboo stammered out and Dream laughed.

Both waved him off as he walked away and Dream decided they should head home. George raised an eyebrow at him when Dream grabbed his wrist and started pulling him in the direction of their house, "Why do you suddenly want to go home so badly?"

"So we can make out before making dinner, duh," Dream answered easily and yet he was dead serious. He could already picture lifting George onto the countertop and kissing him senseless. It was incredibly appealing.

George's eyes widened before he blurted out laughing, a bright look on his face as he allowed himself to be pulled away by his eager boyfriend.

Chapter End Notes

Schlatt is certainly a mystery for now. Everyone's right to be wary of him!

Let me know if you have any questions about anything that happened in the chapter and I'll address them to the best of my ability! Also, I am all for improvement of any kind so feel free to give me some feedback!

Mainly you guys are awesome and so good to me, so I like replying to all your comments!

Chapter 27

Chapter Summary

Dream comforts George after a particularly bad day. They take another step in their relationship.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I was really nervous for this chapter to be honest but you guys are really encouraging! I love this community so much! 😊 Thank you for the kudos, comments, and bookmarks! It's amazing! 😊

WARNING: Descriptive injury and there will be mild SMUT at the end. You have been warned! If you don't like smut then you can scroll over it! 😊

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A couple of days passed in a mostly peaceful manner to George and he couldn't be more thankful for that after the other day with Schlatt. George still got very bad feelings when it came to that man, but Dream was always very reassuring whenever he voiced this so he eventually stopped feeling as worried. Plus he didn't want to annoy Dream.

A few things happened over the course of the two days that passed, but none of those things were relatively bad. Phil finally got released from the hospital since his injuries healed enough for him to move around, though he still had to wear bandages and take healing potions. He'd be right as rain by the end of the week. George was still unsure if his injuries would scar. Phil told him he didn't mind if it did, that scars were nothing to be ashamed of.

The most notable thing that happened though would have to be when Schlatt negotiated with Techno about his release. Schlatt refused to reveal the location of the pillager's base unless he was released from the prison. He offered that Sam could make a red stone tracker to put on him so that they could be at ease about him roaming around.

Eret and Techno were *really* against it at first, but Sam assured them when asked that he could make several red stone trackers to put on Schlatt that he wouldn't be able to disable without Sam. Techno eventually agreed to let Schlatt loose if he wore the trackers *and* allowed a couple of guards to shadow him at all times.

Surprisingly, Schlatt agreed to Techno's precautions without a problem and revealed the location of the pillager base after everything was set in stone. Unsurprisingly, he spent most of his time following Tubbo around and when he wasn't doing that he was watching other people since most others wouldn't talk to him.

Dream didn't like Schlatt being out and made George promise him that he wouldn't be around Schlatt without others being with him. Of course, George agreed immediately. There was *no* way he'd be alone with Schlatt.

Now that Schlatt revealed the location of the pillager base, which was apparently several hours away from the village near a desert biome, Techno recruited Dream and Sapnap to help him plan an attack with several others. The past two days were spent preparing for the mission.

George still had trouble coming to terms with the fact that Dream and Sapnap would face danger again, but was ultimately comforted by the fact that they would have others with him.

Not to mention he just wanted this whole thing over. He wanted to live his life with Dream and his friends without being scared of people hunting them.

"Got another book to recommend to me?" George wondered as he turned to his mentor, Ponk. He held out a small anatomy book, "I finished studying this one on bones."

"Oh good, I can quiz you on the bones eventually! One second," Ponk affirmed from where he was sorting potions in the back of the hospital.

Today had been a slow day so far and they spent most of the morning helping a couple of village warriors with things like bruises and scraps. Other than that, the hospital was completely empty. That was a good thing though.

Ponk went to the bookshelf tucked at the end of the hall and grabbed a thicker book. George blinked, intimidated by the size of it, "Now that you read up on the skeletal system I'll give you this one. It's focus is on the internal organs and it'll be much harder to study."

"Yeah," George swallowed accepting the heavy book, stunned by how heavy it was in his hands.

"Oh and take this one too," Ponk smiled as he handed him what looked to be a large spiral notebook, "This is all my notes about potion making and all the different ingredients I've either studied or discovered for myself."

"Oh nice!" George exclaimed, impressed and a bit more eager to read *that* then the book on the internal organs. Ponk chuckled like he read his thoughts and handed the notebook over.

Ponk went to the front room when they heard the door open while George settled himself on a chair and opened the notebook first, since he still didn't have the courage to begin studying the book on internal organs.

He blinked when he noticed that the notes were organized and color-coded by types of potions and ingredients. George smiled when he pushed his glasses onto his face, squinting to adjust to the enchantment on his glasses before the new colors became less blurry.

George was so caught up in reading that he didn't hear it when Ponk was done treating whoever it was that came in and returned to the back. Ponk stared at him, amused, "Must be nice."

"Huh?" George blinked out of his thoughts, looking at Ponk, who was still staring at him with an amused smile.

"The glasses, it must be nice to see different colors you've never seen before," Ponk mused and George smiled, nodding in agreement. He'd told Ponk the day after Dream gave him the glasses and only because he asked about them, "You know that Puffy is colorblind too?"

"What, really?!" George asked loudly, surprised. He'd never met or heard of anyone else that was colorblind, which always used to make him feel kind of like a freak.

"Yup!" Ponk continued with a grin, returning to the potion shelf, "You should tell her about your experience when you see her. I bet she'd be just as surprised as you."

"Yeah...." George trailed off, kind of excited to have someone to talk to about it who'd understand the struggles of colorblindness.

Another two hours go by and George closed the medical book with a yawn, his brown eyes slightly watering. He felt dazed from reading for so long and his head was beginning to hurt from trying to study all this new medical knowledge.

He placed the medical book on the side table by the chair he was in with Ponk's spiral notebook and stood so that he could stretch out his limbs. He definitely needed to get up and moving, anything other than reading.

Ponk came around the corner from the back and chuckled at him for some reason, "Taking a break?"

"Yeah," George replied groggily, licking his dry lips. He glanced at the golden clock above the door in the main room, "It's about time for lunch anyway."

"True," Ponk agreed, glancing at him again, "Do you mind helping me out real quick before lunch?"

"With what?" George asked curiously. Ponk turned around and grabbed two large baskets.

"Can you help me do some shopping for herbs?" Ponk questioned looking slightly sheepish, "I didn't get around to it yesterday and we are out of most herbs we need."

"Oh," George blinked before huffing with a small smile, "I don't mind."

George carried one of the baskets for Ponk and they walked out of the hospital together. He followed Ponk down the path to the left that took them towards the market stalls near the entrance to the village.

The air was cool and felt amazing. It was one of those days where the temperature outside felt the most ideal. George let himself enjoy the feeling of the sun on his pale face and people-watched as he walked by with Ponk, who mostly remained quiet despite one or two comments.

Once they made it to the market stall that had all sorts of dried herbs hanging off it, George watched Ponk pull a large pouch from his pocket and deposit the right amount of emeralds into the shop owner's hand.

He and Ponk double checked that they got all the herbs they needed, which filled both of their baskets, before leaving. George was left with a deep question, "Hey Ponk?"

"Hmmm?" Ponk hummed, still thumbing through the herbs as they walked back towards the hospital.

"Do you have to pay for things for the hospital with your own money?" George inquired intently. If so, he wasn't sure how Ponk could afford it. Just buying the herbs took a big chunk of emeralds.

Ponk blinked at him, shocked, before outright laughing in delight, "Oh, no, I don't have to do that!"

"Then how do you pay for anything?" George puzzled and Ponk's laughter died down to chuckles.

"Eret funds us," Ponk explained and George's eyes widened, "He's from the royal family, right? He uses his family's money to fund us so that we can have everything we need."

George never heard of anything like that before. Instead of being selfish, Eret was willingly spending his family's fortune to better his village? What a great guy! George smiled to himself.

He and Ponk kept talking about the hospital and then about nothing in particular as they walked towards their hospital. Before they took the path that'd take them to the hospital, however, they heard distant screaming.

"Help! Oh God, someone help!!" Someone else was screaming and George shuddered as both he

and Ponk turned in shock.

George followed Ponk at a run as he took off towards the other entrance to the village. Several village warriors were gathered around one warrior on the ground and George froze in horror at the sight of blood covering his armor and the ground in an ever growing pool.

"Please help!" A warrior begged as soon as he recognized Ponk and George.

Ponk dropped his basket and leapt into action. George shook himself out of his shock and did the same. He almost gagged when he got closer to the warrior screaming and bleeding on the ground. Blood was pouring out of a deep cut on his thigh, almost squirting, and it wasn't stopping.

"Oh fuck!" Ponk cursed and George's heart dropped. That wasn't a good sign. Ponk took off his over shirt and tied it around the man's leg, "George press your hands against the gash!"

George did so wordlessly and felt nauseous at the blood running down his hands. The blood wasn't lessening at all and Ponk continued to curse under his breath. George watched in horror as the warrior slowly stopped making noises altogether.

Ponk frowned, a distraught look on his face as he abruptly stopped moving his hands to check for a pulse, "I-I'm sorry....he didn't make it. He bled to death."

The warriors gathered around either began to cry, curse, or stay stunned in place. George moved his hands away from the wound and stared at them. They were positively covered in blood and shaking from his fried nerves.

"What happened?" Ponk asked intently and George numbly looked away from the bloody body that was once a person.

"We were both patrolling," One warrior supplied tearfully, "And we heard something in the woods by the wall. He wanted to check it out but *I* thought it was just an animal."

"Then what happened?" Ponk questioned softly, a serious look in his eyes.

"He went and disappeared from sight for just a couple of minutes then he was screaming," The warrior winced, tears spilling down his face, "I ran after him and he was already on the ground bleeding so I tried to carry him here but...."

"It's definitely a sword wound," Ponk hesitated, looking at the body, "Someone attacked him and cut the artery, there was nothing I could do."

George flinched. At least Ponk hadn't froze up or almost threw up at all the blood. At least Ponk wasn't completely useless. George clenched his teeth together, trying to ground himself.

"....need to report to Technoblade," Ponk was saying when George tuned back in thoughtlessly. Ponk turned to him and his morphed into sympathy, "George go take a break and get some fresh air okay? Thank you for helping me."

George nodded wordlessly and stood up shakily. He left on autopilot and briefly felt bad for not sticking around to help Ponk some more. He just left him to deal with it but he couldn't get the image of the man screaming on the ground bleeding out of his head.

There was a crowd gathering of villagers watching with morbid fascination, some look outright sick and began to leave as well, but George overheard some murmuring of the villagers.

"Poor guy, I hate that it happened to him."

"The clerics barely did anything though."

"Yeah, we're supposed to trust them to take care of us when we need it and they couldn't even stop the bleeding."

George felt a rush of panic and anger run through him, making him almost lightheaded as he all but jogged away from the group and down a path. They basically called him and Ponk useless. Ponk didn't deserve that, not when he was so skilled and brave. And who were they to talk when *they* couldn't have helped that man either?

His legs began to shake as he kept thinking on what happened and he turned to sit against a wall in between two buildings. It was shaded and helped George regain himself.

He did not look forward to telling Dream about this. George wished he never had to think about it again. He knew that not everyone can be saved but he wished he'd been a little more comfortable with things before he experienced someone dying like that. Then again, no one would ever be ready for that.

"Hello."

George flinched, almost hitting his head back on the cobblestone of the building he sat against as he lifted his head. A tall figure stood in front of the area he was sitting in and George paled when he realized it was Schlatt.

Schlatt rose an eyebrow at him when he didn't reply and continued on anyways, "You look pretty pale. Are you alright? George, isn't it?"

"Y-Yes and I'm.....I'm okay," George faltered, realizing that he definitely didn't look or feel okay. Schlatt just stared at him.

"You're Dream's lover, right?" Schlatt questioned randomly and George looked up at him, only to feel uncomfortable meeting his eyes so he decided to stare at the ground.

"Dream's my boyfriend...." George answered and then realized it was weird that Schlatt even wanted to know in the first place, "Why do you want to know?"

"I was just curious that's all," Schlatt prodded easily, "I heard a little bit about you both from Tubbo. I hear a lot of things about Dream."

George continued to stare at the ground. He still felt uncomfortable around Schlatt and Dream wasn't going to be happy to know he was alone with him. Plus, he wasn't sure what to say to that. Tubbo wouldn't say anything bad about them though, "Okay."

Schlatt cocked his head, studying him, "I heard Dream's really successful here. He's talented, pretty much tied with Techno in terms of talent."

Unease and annoyance ran through George and he looked up sharply, "What do you want?"

Schlatt's eyes gave nothing away but George still caught the flash of contempt that ran through them before he could hide it, "No need to be so rude, I'm only talking with you."

"No offense, but I just lost someone on the job and you're the *last* person I want to be speaking with," George replied flatly, feeling strength return to his limbs from how long he'd been sitting. He was no longer as shaky.

Schlatt remained silent, just staring at him and George was starting to get genuinely angry. Was it so hard to notice that he wanted to be left alone? What the hell does he *want*?!

"I guess I'm talking to you about Dream because I'm trying to understand," Schlatt spoke up suddenly, as if he were answering George's thoughts.

"Understand what?" George wondered tightly, scowling up at the dark man.

"Why he would choose someone like you," Schlatt declared, still staring at him passively almost lost in thoughts.

Shock graced across George's face at the unexpected and yet cruel sounding statement. Then pain

immediately bloomed in his chest. Schlatt continued, "There's really nothing impressive about you, no offense, and you don't really have anything to offer. I was just curious because you don't match well together."

George recoiled in disbelief, his eyes burning with frustrated and hateful tears as he glared at Schlatt, standing abruptly, "I wouldn't expect someone like *you* to understand, asshole! I don't know how Tubbo can stand to be within ten *feet* of you!"

Rage crossed Schlatt's face but George didn't give a shit about that. He pushed past Schlatt and retreated before he ending up in a fist fight with a known criminal. That's the last thing he needs and it's entirely possible with how upset George is.

He walked blindly, his vision blurry from tears. As much as he tried to ignore it, Schlatt's words kept coming back and then the dead warrior from before kept coming back.

There's nothing really impressive about you.

Nothing to offer.

You don't match well together.

George drew in a shaky breath and decided that he needed to go find Dream. He needed to tell him what happened although he was worried about what Dream would do once he learned....but he didn't want him finding out another way. Plus he could use the comfort Dream often gave him.

He changed directions and headed towards the castle, one of the places Dream often resided nowadays. He rushed up the steps and hurriedly opened the front doors, immediately searching around for his boyfriend.

George eventually came across Eret and Karl, who greeted him with a smile, "Hey George!"

"Hey, uh, w-where's Dream?" George asked, carefully avoiding looking them straight in the eyes so they couldn't see him fighting tears. He knew his face had to be red and his eyes even worse.

"He left about an hour ago," Karl answered slowly, "Are you alright George?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," George lied, feeling awkward, "I guess I'll go find him then...thanks."

"No problem...." Eret trailed off and George blushed at the way they were both staring at him. Karl looked concerned.

George turned and fast-walked out of the castle. He walked down the steps and onto the path robotically, trying to keep the tears at bay. He wasn't sure where else to look for Dream other than their home or the training area.

He sucked in a deep breath, desperately trying to calm himself as he turned to begin walking towards the training area. He eventually found Dream walking in the direction of the castle with Tubbo and Ranboo in tow.

"George!" Dream beamed, like just *seeing* George made his entire day. George felt a pang in his chest and winced. Usually something like that would have made him feel all warm. Now it just made him want to cry even more.

"H-Hi," George greeted lamely once all three of them came closer. His shoulders slumped at his inability to just pull himself together.

"What's wrong?" Tubbo questioned with concern while Dream's face dropped when he realized that something was wrong. Ranboo frowned.

"Someone died today," George confessed and they all stiffened, "A warrior.....we couldn't save him in time."

"Oh..." Ranboo wilted in sympathy and Tubbo frowned, patting his back. Dream walked up to George with a sad face and hugged him to his chest. George felt his eyes well up with more tears, his throat clogged from trying not to cry.

"I'm sorry, baby," Dream said softly and hugged him tighter, "It'll be okay and you'll be able to handle it better next time."

George remained silent as a few tears fell and got soaked up by Dream's hoodie. He decided that he'd keep feeling this awful until he just told Dream everything, "I took a break after that and Schlatt found me."

Dream froze and then abruptly pulled away, keeping his arms on George's shoulders. George couldn't look him in the eye, even though he had his mask on, and looked at the ground.

"Schlatt?" Tubbo asked in alarm, "Did he....what happened with Schlatt? I just saw him like two hours ago...."

"He just said some things to me, that's all," George answered with a frown. He didn't want to go into the details with Ranboo and Tubbo there.

Tubbo looked even more concerned, "What kind of things?"

"What did he say?" Dream demanded, his words almost covering Tubbo's as they spoke at the same time. Dream's hands clenched on his shoulders.

George gulped at the angry tone he had, "It's nothing...uh..."

"It's not *nothing*," Dream scowled and George felt embarrassed, "Is he also the reason you're so upset?"

"I'm sorry if he said something," Tubbo spoke up feebly and George looked up at him, his face was hesitant, "Schlatt just....he's not good at talking to others. He's kind of inappropriate and says things without realizing how people would take it."

"You don't have to defend him," Ranboo frowned and Tubbo gave him a look.

"I'm *not*," Tubbo denied, shaking his head, "That's just how Schlatt honestly is. He used to say things to me that were insulting and I'd be honest with him when he was being an asshole. Then he'd apologize like he really didn't realize he was being mean or rude. I'm just saying that he might not have been trying to be cruel."

George thought back on how Schlatt didn't have a mean look on his face. Just passive or even curious. Still....his words were way too cruel. George frowned and Dream started glaring.

"I don't care if he wasn't trying to be mean," Dream hissed and Tubbo jumped. Dream turned to George again, "Let's go home, George."

"Wha-?" George gasped, cutting himself off when Dream grabbed him by the hand and tugged him away towards their home. He glanced back at Tubbo and Ranboo to see Ranboo speaking frantically to an upset looking Tubbo like he was trying to soothe him.

Dream kept pulling him home and George remained quiet the entire time, worriedly endlessly about what Dream would do once George told him. He knew that Dream wouldn't *agree* with Schlatt's words, but still. George kind of believed them. Sort of.

Their house arrived into view a few minutes later and Dream effortlessly pulled him inside. George was surprised when Dream closed the door and immediately pulled him up to their bedroom. He stopped at the bed and maneuvered George to sit down on the bed before he joined him.

"Alright, George, now tell me what he said," Dream urged and took off his mask, placing it on the ground by the bed. George searched his yellowish eyes and looked down sadly.

"He said he didn't understand why you chose me," George confessed, easier now that they were

alone inside their home, "He said you were so talented while I'm.....*not*."

Dream's face morphed from shock to disbelief and then anger, "What?"

"He said he was just curious on why you chose me," George continued, wringing his hands anxiously, "He said that I have nothing to offer you and that we don't match well."

"What the hell?!" Dream shouted and George winced, "He doesn't even *know* us?! What was the point of him randomly telling you things like that?!"

"I....don't know. He didn't look mean or cruel about it but...." George trailed off to a stop, unsure of what to say. Tubbo's words about Schlatt may have been true.

"He still should have minded his own goddamn business!" Dream exclaimed, anger turning to rage, "I swear to God, he's just asking me to put him in his place!"

"Don't do that!" George yelped, lifting his head to see how angry his boyfriend was, "That'll make things worse!"

"Tough!" Dream growled out, "How could he say that to you? He doesn't know anything about you! He doesn't get it! *No one* gets it!"

"Huh?" George stopped, blinking at him when he started firing off sentences, "What do you mean no one gets it?"

"No one understands how *special* you are!" Dream insisted and George froze while Dream let out a long sigh, almost defeated, "*You* don't even know how special you are."

"That's cause I'm not Dream.....I'm not talented," George confessed, his eyes welling up with tears again, "I'm not like you. I'm barely average at anything I do."

"That's just not true, baby," Dream replied his voice softer now as he calmed down, turning to put his hands on George's face, "You're *special*. You are kind and constantly thinking about other people. You lay down your personal wants to please the people you care about. You try hard even when you're not good at something."

"Dream...." George whispered, tears running down his face. Dream just smiled.

"Even if they had given you a choice back in the nether, you still would have chosen to go into the sweatbox because you said you didn't want Sapnap to go back there. That's how considerate you are," Dream continued with a dead serious look, "You may get sad and *think* about giving up

sometimes, but you never actually do. You're special, baby. And you're definitely special to *me*."

The floodgates opened and George couldn't help but sob, pulling Dream towards him in an embrace. Hearing what Dream thought about him washed away all the nasty words Schlatt said about him.

Dream held him as he cried and playing with George's hair, rubbing little circles in his scalp that felt really good. A few minutes passed and George's crying was starting to lessen.

"I swear I'm gonna *kill* him for making you feel like this," Dream claimed as if he were speaking facts.

"It's not worth it," George sniffed, smiling slightly when Dream hummed as if he disagreed. Dream smiled back at him and George's eyes fell on his lips, "Kiss?"

Dream blinked at him before his eyes lit up and he leaned in, giving George's pink lips a peck. That wasn't good enough for George and he grabbed a handful of Dream's hoodie to pull him in a proper kiss, swallowing Dream's chuckle.

They traded kisses back and forth, slowly becoming more heated as George licked and nibbled on Dream's bottom lip. Dream shuddered and opened his mouth, letting George do what he wanted. George shifted, climbing into Dream's lap to straddle him as they continued to kiss.

George leaned back when he needed to catch his breath and Dream leaned in to plant wet kisses on his neck and collarbones, making George shiver. He gasped in surprise when Dream bit down on his collarbone and his pants tightened at the feeling.

George gently grabbed Dream face to pull him back into more heated kisses, shifting around on his lap uncomfortably due to his problem pressing in his pants. George gasped against Dream's lips when Dream moved a hand under George's hoodie, feeling up George's stomach and up to his chest.

Dream's finger brushed against his nipple and George jolted at the sensitive feeling, pulling away from Dream's lips to catch his breath again. Dream looked at him and his lips looked kiss swollen while his hair was messed up. Dream was gorgeous, "Is that too much?"

"N-No...just surprising," George answered and Dream smiled, flicking his fingers against George's nipple again. George let out a moan in surprise and blushed intensely, burying his face in Dream's shoulder while Dream chuckled.

"No need to be so shy. It's just us here baby," Dream said lowly and, God, his voice like that was such a turn on. He *had* to know it. George winced when his erection throbbed. He glanced down and saw a bulge in Dream's jeans as well and felt a bit prideful to make him that turned on with just

making out.

"Dream..." George leaned back and Dream stopped all movements at the serious tone in his voice.

"Yeah baby?" Dream asked curiously when George hesitated, biting his lip. He felt like he might die from embarrassment for asking what he was about to ask, but he was so turned on and he just wanted Dream.

"Can we get each other off?" George wondered bluntly and then his face burned at what he said. Dream's eyes went wide and his eyebrows practically hit his hairline. George hurried to continue, "Like, without taking all our clothes off or g-going all the way. I'm still not ready for that yet."

Dream stared at him in surprise before he calmed down, "You mean like, uh, hand jobs or...?"

George nodded quickly and Dream blushed, looking down at George's pants shyly before a hesitant look crossed his face, "Baby, you're not.....you're not just wanting to do this because of Schlatt's words right?"

George blinked, stunned. He hadn't even been thinking of Schlatt when he suggested that. Where did that question come from? Dream noticed his confusion and continued, "I just don't want you to feel like you have to do this to please me or because you want to prove him wrong or anything like that."

Warmth enveloped him and he grinned, "I wasn't even thinking about Schlatt. I was just thinking about *you* and how you make me feel."

"Really?" Dream asked, his usual smirk returning to his face as he wound his arms around him, "So you really wanna get each other off?"

"That's what I said isn't it?" George replied cheekily, feeling a bit more empowered now that he got the embarrassment of asking out of the way. Dream's eyes narrowed at him.

"Brat," He commented without any real malice and pulled George into another French kiss. George hummed in delight when Dream's hand returned to going under his hoodie.

He moaned into Dream's mouth, squirming in his lap when Dream kept playing with his nipples. George was so into what was happening that he almost jolted when Dream started leaning him down against the bed without breaking their kiss.

Dream shifted to adjust their position so that George was comfortable and Dream was snug between his legs. As Dream's tongue mapped around his mouth and his hand played with George's nipples, George moaned and pulled at Dream's hair. Dream apparently really liked that.

After one particular, accidental, hard yank, Dream groaned against George's lips and that made George's cock twitch. George whined and shifted against Dream. Suddenly Dream ground his hips down against George's and they both moaned at the friction. Dream continued doing that until George thought he was going to go crazy.

George pulled away from Dream's lips to look at him, "D-Dream, can we....can we just...."

Understanding bled into Dream's face and he smirked, leaning back, "Okay, baby, sit up for me?"

George immediately sat up and gasped when Dream pulled him on his lap again. Dream looked down at him hesitantly, "You're really okay with this?"

"Yes," George consented, smiling, "Can we continue now or are you gonna continue to make me wait?"

Dream's eyes widened at his bratty words and then his eyes darkened, "You better behave or I *will* make you wait, baby."

A wave of arousal and a twitch of his cock had George almost moaning just from those words. It sounded like a threat and George was surprised at his reaction. Dream smirked like he wasn't surprised though and then his hand went to George's zipper.

Dream glanced up at him again like he was searching for hesitancy but George just smiled. Dream smiled back and unzipped George's pants. George felt a little embarrassed so he busied himself by unzipping Dream's pants at the same time.

George's face burned when Dream pulled down his underwear enough for his cock to spring free. Suddenly he felt self-conscious. Would Dream like the way he looked naked? Would Dream be disappointed? What if we wasn't good at pleasing Dream?

When he looked at Dream's face, however, he saw desire written all over his face and Dream glanced at him, "You're so beautiful, baby. I'm so lucky."

George's face burned further but he felt like glowing at the praise. George then pulled down Dream's boxers and his eyes widened when Dream's huge cock sprung free, slapping against his hoodie, "Holy *shit*, Dream."

Dream wheezed at him and George couldn't help but laugh along with him at his own reaction. Dream's cock was big, but of course it was. Dream was tall and so much bigger than him, but those were all things George liked about Dream. George studied Dream's cock and reached down to run his fingers across it, drawing a surprised moan and a jerk out of Dream.

Dream did the same to him and George shuddered, almost falling into Dream at the pleasure. Dream chuckled and swiped his thumb across the head of his cock. George whimpered and tried to focus enough to do the same to Dream.

He paused when Dream pulled away and looked at his face in confusion. George's eyes widened when Dream licked a slow hot stripe up his palm and returned his hand to caressing George's cock. George moaned at the pleasurable feeling of Dream's warm palm stroking him.

George copied Dream's action, licking up his palm before returning to stroke Dream's cock and Dream inhaled sharply. George thought he would go crazy when Dream increased the pace a little.

Dream leaned in and began leaving little kisses across George's jaw and neck. His lips slowly traveled up to his ear and George moaned when Dream nibbled on it lightly, "Dream...."

"Hmmm?" Dream hummed right next to his ear and George shivered, falling into Dream further, struggling to focus on stroking Dream's cock. Dream suddenly twisted his wrist a little on the upstroke.

"*Nghh!*" George moaned out, biting his lip and Dream pressed a smile into his ear.

"Does that feel good, baby?" Dream whispered into his ear and George was panting by that point. He clung to Dream with his other arm.

"Y-Yes, Dream, it's g-good," He stammered out and hoped Dream didn't stop moving his hand like that.

"Here, let's do this," Dream said softly as he pulled away from George's ear to scoot a little closer to George. George blinked in confusion until he realized Dream was lining up their cocks together.

Dream wrapped his arms around George and began grinding down. Both of them moaned at the naked friction of their cocks sliding together. Dream ground their hips together and returned to kissing George's neck.

"Ah!" George gasped into a groan when Dream started biting him. Not hard enough to break the skin but, God, did that feel wonderful against the sensitive skin on his neck and collarbones.

Dream kept leaving bites all on his neck and collarbones, even pushing aside his hoodie to bit on his shoulders as he continued grinding his cock on George's. George arched his back and lifted his hips to meet Dream's grinding. Dream moaned into the skin of his neck, the vibrations made George squirm.

Soon the room was filled with their panting and moaning as they bucked their hips wildly against each other. George could feel the pleasure building and whimpered into Dream's shoulders as he held on for dear life.

Dream's hand came down on both their cocks and George moaned loudly when he squeezed and stroked both of their cocks while they kept grinding their hips together. George's eyes welled up, "D-Dream...."

"I know, baby," Dream murmured breathlessly, "I'm close too."

George gasped harshly when Dream began grinding down harder with renewed energy, his hand almost a blur as he stroked their cocks quickly. Dream's breath stuttered, "*Fuck*, George, you're so good for me."

George entire body burned and he whined at the praise, all but collapsing further into Dream as he bucked his hips, chasing the pleasure, "So pretty."

"*Dream...*" George moaned at the praise, his hips jerking up into Dream's, causing them both to moan.

Suddenly the pleasure built to a boiling point in George's gut and he threw his head back when Dream ground his cock against his particularly hard. George cried out into Dream's neck as he came, holding onto Dream's shoulders.

Dream shuddered at his cries and his breath hitched into a deep groan as he came just after George, his hips slowing down in grinding. Dream stroked their cocks through it until George whimpered at the overstimulation.

They sat holding each other and panting to regain their breath from their post-high orgasms. George didn't think there was anything better than that. That definitely beat doing it alone and it also beat any fantasies George used to have when he lived alone.

To George's immense surprise, Dream was sniffing and George leaned back from his neck in alarm. Tears shined in Dream's eyes but they hadn't fallen yet, "Dream?!"

"Sorry, I'm just so happy," Dream swallowed and blushed intensely. George's eyes widened. He'd never seen Dream blush so hard before and realized he was probably embarrassed at crying.

"No, its okay," George smiled warmly, rubbing a finger on Dream's cheek, "I'm glad you're happy."

"That was so good. You're so good to me," Dream mumbled into George's shoulder, hugging him

tightly, "I love you so much."

"I love you too Dream," George replied softly, hugging him back just as tightly. George felt himself getting emotional too, "Thank you for choosing me out of all others."

Dream's breath hitched, "I could say the same to you, baby. You always make me feel so special, like I'm some amazing person. I want you to feel like that too."

George's heart melted, "I do feel like that with you. I guess I just need reminding sometimes."

"Always. Anytime you want to hear it," Dream vowed and George's eyes filled with tears as he buried his face in Dream's hoodie.

Later after they were cleaning each other up and changing clothes, George looked in the mirror in their bathroom and promptly dropped his hoodie in shock, "DREAM!"

Dream whirled around to look at him and wheezed when he realized George was looking at all the red and/or purple marks around his neck, collarbones, and shoulders.

"Dream, you *monster*!" George laughed but still managed to look mortified, "You marked me up too much!"

"What can I say, I'm possessive," Dream said, his grin all teeth. George groaned, shaking his head.

"I'm gonna have to wear a bandages or something to cover this up!" George complained and Dream wheezed, walking over and hugging him from behind.

"You marked me too, see?" Dream claimed, showing off a couple of marks that George put on his neck. George looked at him flatly, unamused, "You can hide most of them with your hoodie."

"Yeah, I guess," George sighed and they finished changing into different clothes. Dream wore dark blue jeans and a black tank top while George wore light blue jeans and a light blue and white striped tank top that Dream bought him.

"You look so pretty, baby," Dream murmured to him as he looked him up and down. George blushed, "Look, we're both wearing tank tops!"

"I know," George huffed, amused. He felt a whole lot better now that he's spent time with Dream, just like he thought he would.

They walked down into the kitchen together and Dream helped George set things up for dinner.

Dream was just putting dough on a pan when someone knocked on the door. George went to go open it since he was just waiting for their steak to cook but Dream intercepted him and opened it first.

"Hello my favorite people!" Sapnap greeted cheerfully and George rolled his eyes with a smile. Dream chuckled.

"Hey Sapnap," Dream greeted and allowed Sapnap in, closing the door behind him. Sapnap sniffed the air.

"Smells like magic in here," He grinned and Dream laughed again, "Mind making me whatever you're cooking?"

"Steak and bread, you want some?" George offered with a grin, "It's dinner just so you know."

"It's 4 pm," Sapnap commented, raising an eyebrow. George shrugged, "Sure I'll eat dinner with you guys."

"What have you been up to today?" Dream quizzed as George moved to place another steak in the smoker.

"I was working today. Security stuff with Puffy. I'm gonna get my own squad next week she decided," Sapnap told them and George hummed as he worked.

"That's nice," Dream grinned, "You deserve it."

"Thanks," Sapnap rambled, his excited mood dying down, "I just got off actually and saw Karl for a bit. Then Techno showed up and said that they're executing the two pillager prisoners today and I didn't want to see that."

Dream frowned thoughtfully, "Yeah...."

George blinked in surprise, "The execution was *today*?"

"Techno decided it today since Schlatt already told us the location of the pillager base," Sapnap explained dully and changed the subject, "Anyways! Guess what I saw earlier?"

"What?" George asked in amusement. Sapnap had the look on an excited kid about to get some candy.

"I saw Tubbo shouting at Schlatt a little earlier before coming here!" Sapnap grinned

mischievously and George's smile dropped, "I've never seen the kid so angry except for that time during the meeting. Ranboo was *literally* holding him back."

"Good for Tubbo," Dream muttered angrily and Sapnap paused looking at him in confusion, "I still want to beat Schlatt to death with a rock."

"WHOA!" Sapnap lifted his hands laughing nervously, "What's with that psychopathic statement?"

George sighed and explained to Sapnap what happened earlier and what Schlatt had told him. Sapnap slowly became angry as well, "What the hell? No wonder Tubbo was yelling at him."

"Yeah well...." George trailed off, hoping that their arguing didn't lead to anything bad. Dream grumbled under his breath.

"But that warrior dying today has me confused," Sapnap prattled, his brow furrowing as he leaned against the wall, "He was attacked but the attacker was never found."

"It's weird. Part of me wants to say that Schlatt did it but he's been watched 24/7," Dream sighed and scratched his head, "Techno will deal with it though and if we need to help then we will."

"True," Sapnap grinned eagerly, "I'm just ready to get on with the mission!"

"Missions take time to put together," George laughed out at his eagerness for action, "You can't just go without preparation."

"Whatever," Sapnap rolled his eyes and then he sighed, "Ugh, Puffy and I are going to be so busy these next few days once Techno learns about the attack on the warrior today."

"Sucks to be security then," Dream teased and Sapnap flipped him off. George shook his head at them and watched Dream place the dough into the furnace next to him and light it.

They chatted for another half hour until the meat and bread were done cooking. Then they ate standing since Dream and George didn't have a dining table or a couch yet. This didn't bother Sapnap any and he complimented them on their cooking skills.

George allowed himself to completely relax and forget everything that happened prior in the day. He was with his boyfriend and best friend under the roof of a house he felt safe in.

And tomorrow was another day.

So be honest with me guys. How was that? I was so nervous because I don't usually write smut and this is the first time I've posted anything with smut in it! This means I need feedback!

Was the smut not detailed enough or too wordy? Should I have been more descriptive? Should I have wrote in their thoughts more? Let me know what you think because it helps me improve! Thank you for everyone that I know will comment. I see every comment and I appreciate you!

Chapter 28

Chapter Summary

Dream settles some things regarding the mission. Dream and Ranboo are targeted again.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! How've you been? I hope you've been good! I know I have, just juggling life, ya know? 😊 Thank you all for the continued support for my story! I hope you enjoy the chapter!

WARNINGS: For descriptions of torture and violent attacks

Things get real angsty again in this one.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The next day came and Dream found himself completely distracted no matter what he was doing. He kept thinking back on the evening before when George wanted to be intimate for the first time. Dream thought he was going to die when George suggested getting each other off. At first he was worried George didn't actually want to do it and was trying to prove Schlatt wrong, but his fears were completely unfounded.

He's also been distracted thinking of all the things he wanted to do or say to Schlatt for making George so upset with himself. George already had a lot on his plate trying to learn how to heal people on top of making potions and herbs. That's bound to stress anyone out.

"-eam...."

"Dream!"

Dream jumped, taken by surprise and Puffy raised an eyebrow at him. Sapnap was at her side, smirking at him and Techno stared at Dream blankly, "You alright there Dream? You spaced out."

"Oh, don't worry. I'm sure he's thinking about all the things he wants to do to George," Sapnap laughed while wiggling his eyebrows suggestively. Dream rolled his eyes at his best friend's immature behavior, "Don't think I didn't see those marks on George yesterday at dinner!"

"I did not need to know this," Techno sighed, matching Phil's disappointed sigh down pat. Puffy

giggled.

"Whatever," Dream playfully pushed Sapnap's shoulder before turning to Technoblade, "You called us all here and started talking about things we've already gone over so I zoned out."

"Well sorry," Techno drawled in monotone, "It's important to get all the details right."

They were interrupted by the meeting doors opening. Eret walked through with Sam at his heels. They stood off to the side and waited for the doors to close before Eret turned to Technoblade, "I've officially gathered enough volunteer warriors to accompany you all on the mission which totaled to 21."

"That's a lot," Sapnap whistled, his eyes wide with surprise. Dream felt just as surprised. That was a lot but not too much that would take away from the safety of the village.

Techno nodded, "I've secured aside enough weapons and shields for the mission. Karl's helped me notify surrounding villages about the pillagers in case they try what they did at Jack's village."

"Any word of pillagers around those villages?" Dream asked immediately and Techno shook his head. Dream felt relieved.

"As for my side, me and my team are still investigating what happened to the warrior yesterday. There's been no suspicious activity so the injury was either caused by one of our own or the person slipped away quickly after dealing the blow," Puffy reported and Techno frowned thoughtfully.

"Schlatt's still being watched?" He asked and Dream tensed immediately. Sapnap shot him a look while Puffy nodded.

"I've made sure of it," Eret added slowly, looking serious, "He's spent most of his time with Tubbo."

"Someone's been with Tubbo all the time I believe," Sam spoke up with a smile on his face, "Be it Tommy or especially Ranboo."

Techno nodded again, looking relieved, "That's good. And Sam, have you finished those communicators I asked for?"

"I've been working nonstop," Sam replied intently, "They won't be absolutely perfect since they were made in a rush but they should serve you well."

"Communicators?" Sapnap blinked, looking confused.

"I asked Sam to make us communicators so that we can type messages to each other," Techno explained and Dream's eyes widened. That would be extremely useful during the mission and in general.

"It's not perfect," Sam reminded softly, "After this is all over, I can make them better so that we can even call each other. I can make enough to be sold eventually!"

"Sounds like a plan," Puffy grinned eagerly, "How many did you make already?"

"Enough for everyone in this room excluding me. That's all I had time for," Sam apologized.

"Sam, you made communication devices in, like, five days or so, that's more than I expected," Techno said and walked over to clamp Sam on his shoulder, "Thank you."

Sam beamed under the praise, nodding his head. Dream glanced over at them hesitantly, "What do we do if we get there and this is all Schlatt's trap?"

Techno, Eret, and Puffy's expressions darkened as he replied, "Then we'll either handle it or retreat. Then we'll deal with *him*."

"I still don't trust him just coming to us with this information," Puffy grumbled, crossing her arms, "I swear if he hurts any of us..."

Dream felt mom vibes coming from her extra hard. Sapnap chuckled at the look on his face. Puffy reminded him a lot of his mom the more Dream thought about it. Just like how Phil sometimes reminded him of his father.

"Sorry you feel that way Puffy. I'm only here to help though."

Everyone whirled to the doors and Dream growled when he saw Schlatt there, silently watching them all. The last 24 hours and George crying in his arms replayed in his mind. He was moving before he even noticed.

He pushed Techno aside and grabbed Schlatt by the throat, pushing him against the door. Schlatt's eyes flew wide and Sapnap shouted something, his arms around Dream like he was trying to pull him back.

"Give me *one* good reason why I shouldn't beat you into a coma for what you said to George?!" Dream snarled and understanding flew through Eret's eyes while Puffy's mouth dropped open.

Schlatt coughed, choking on the firm hold Dream had on his throat. He still managed to choke out, "I-It wasn't my intention to u-upset him-"

Dream slammed him back and Schlatt winced in pain, "You basically told him he was useless and talentless how were you *not* trying to upset him?!"

Puffy and Techno's eyes widened while Sam tensed, glaring at Schlatt from behind Eret. Schlatt swallowed heavily, "Tubbo already told me that I was too cruel. I can....I *will* apologize."

"No, you won't go *near* him. He's too good to be around you," Dream spat out and dropped Schlatt, allowing Sapnap to pull him away.

Schlatt coughed harshly, rubbing his throat. Techno looked at Dream and Dream just stared back. Techno looked back at Schlatt then, "You really are stupid, huh Schlatt? Messing with George when you knew he was with Dream."

"I wasn't trying to *mess* with him," Schlatt glared, still rubbing his throat, "I was just curious on why the two were together when they were so different."

Dream bared his teeth and Sapnap's hold around him tightened, "Don't do it buddy. He isn't worth the time."

"Anyways, you try anything on the mission or if this turns out to be a trap, I'll kill you myself," Techno claimed and Schlatt looked at him in surprise.

"I'm going with you?"

"Is there a reason you don't want to?" Eret questioned, his eyes flashing with hostility. Schlatt held up his hands.

"No, I was just surprised," Schlatt muttered and eyed Techno, "You aren't going to be sending the kids on this mission too, right? You seem to like making child soldiers work for you."

Techno's face dropped instantly and Dream flinched instinctively when Techno punched a hole in the wood of the door by Schlatt's head. Schlatt, himself, looked almost stunned at the throw.

"Those kids are some of the bravest we'll ever know. Don't you *dare* call them child soldiers. I don't make them do anything they don't offer to do themselves," Techno sneered and Schlatt said nothing, "If you're so worried about Tubbo then why don't you stop trying to make an enemy out of everyone you meet?"

Schlatt glared at him but still said nothing. Eret was smirking and Puffy stared holes in Schlatt's

head. Schlatt sighed, "I said too much. I'll just take my leave now."

"You do that," Techno frowned, watching as he got off the floor and left. He turned to Dream and the others, "About the mission, we're leaving in two days."

"Two days?" Sapnap blinked, surprised at his words.

"Yes. We've gone over everything four times or more by now," Techno sighed, "Plus I just want to fight something at the moment."

"We should go tell the others that you decided the date of the mission," Puffy added and Techno nodded.

"Eret can you inform the warriors you talked about? I have to go tell Phil and Wilbur," Techno commented, a thoughtful look on his face.

"Sure thing," Eret agreed and beckoned Sam to follow him out.

After they left, Techno turned to Dream, "I'm sorry about what Schlatt said to George. I've already assigned more warriors to follow Schlatt around ever since the attack yesterday."

"That's good," Dream said slowly, "Something tells me Schlatt had nothing to do with that warrior attack though."

"Same," Techno sighed, looking stressed, "I need to go now but if anything comes up let me know."

"Will do," Sapnap smiled, turning to Puffy after Techno left the room, "Do you need me for anything right away?"

Puffy smiled back, shaking her head, "Not at the moment. I need to go talk to Nikki."

"Good cause I need to go tell Karl that I'll be leaving in a couple days," Sapnap chuckled, his amber eyes light, "He made me swear to tell him."

"Same," Puffy laughed and Dream thought about George, knowing his boyfriend was conflicted about him going on the mission, "I'll see you guys later. Dream, if something else happens to George or to you, let me know."

Dream blinked in surprise but Puffy was completely serious. She took her job as a protector of the village and of the villagers seriously. Dream smiled, "Thanks a bunch Puffy."

She beamed and then left the room with a skip to her step. Sapnap turned to him, "She's pretty awesome, right?"

"Right," Dream chuckled before he thought about George again. His face must have shown his anxiety because Sapnap frowned at him.

"What's up?" Sapnap questioned, his brow knitting in confusion. Dream sighed.

"Honestly? I'm nervous about the mission," Dream confessed and Sapnap's eyes widened in surprise, "I'm....I'm worried about leaving George behind here."

"Oh," Sapnap hummed, shooting Dream a look, "He'll be alright. You know he won't be on his own, right?"

"It's not that," Dream answered softly, "We've never willingly been apart since we met. Leaving him behind feels....*wrong*."

"I think I understand," Sapnap began, understanding dawning in his gaze, "But George has been focusing on medicine lately, not fighting. And what you said you taught him were barely the basics in defending himself."

"I know..." Dream trailed off, staring at the ground, "It'll just feel weird to be without him I guess."

Sapnap smirked widely and clapped him on the back, "That's just the honeymoon phase talking."

Dream rolled his eyes. He was glad that he had Sapnap to take his mind off things he tended to overthink about, "Whatever. I guess I'll go find George."

"Yup! If he shows a worried face then flick him in the forehead for me!" Sapnap said cheerfully.

"*What?*" Dream laughed out, surprised. Sapnap laughed along with him as they left the room.

Dream was redirected to Bad's library by Ponk when he arrived at the hospital because Ponk said it was a slow day so he let George go to the library to study his medical books.

He walked into the two-story library and was immediately greeted by the nostalgic sight of Bad and George sitting together on the floor, only they were surrounded by books. They seemed to be gushing over something in particular but they both stopped when they heard Dream come in.

"Dream!" They both beamed simultaneously and it brought a smile to his face that was probably

almost as big as his mask's.

"So nice to see you again!" Bad chirped eagerly, setting aside his book as George shifted his legs to get comfortable.

"Same to you Bad," Dream chuckled, leaning his weight on one foot, "What are you two up to?"

"George is studying his medical book on the internal organs and I found it kind of interesting so he's been sharing it," Bad shrugged, looking over at George who nodded instantly.

"Bad's been helping me study by quizzing me," George grinned and he looked grateful as he said it. Bad smiled.

"What are you up to Dream?" Bad asked politely and that's one thing Dream loved about Bad.

"Just got out of another meeting," Dream answered casually, entering the room and sitting down with them. George flicked his brown eyes at him then like he was studying him.

"How are the plans for the mission going?" Bad questioned seriously.

"They're pretty much done," Dream shrugged, avoiding their eyes, "All that's left is to get everyone that's going ready."

Something unreadable went through George's eyes and he suddenly looked serious. Dream hoped that he wasn't still worried about him going on the mission. He was distracted when he noticed Bad lost in thought.

"When does Techno want to start?" George asked, clearing his throat. His voice was on edge.

"Two days...." Dream hesitated before answering. Bad's face shot up at that and George's eyes widened, "But we've already prepared everything we need."

"Two days?!" Bad squeaked, looking absolutely worried, "I thought I'd have more time!"

George and Dream both looked at him, confused, "Time for what?"

"Time to talk Skeppy out of going..." Bad sighed, palming his face, "He wants closure but I'm too worried about him getting captured again."

"I feel you there," George frowned, rubbing Bad's back, "But it sounds like this will help Skeppy

get past being their prisoner and plus, he won't be alone."

Dream nodded quickly in agreement to George's words. Bad stared at George and sighed again, nodding his head, "Yeah, I know. I can't help being worried about him."

"I know," George smiled warmly, "Can you excuse us Bad?"

Bad blinked at him but nodded again. Dream looked at George in confusion before his eyes widened when George stood up and grabbed Dream's wrist, tugging on it, "Follow me."

Dream stood slowly, realizing George was in serious mode again and quietly allowed George to pull him out of the library and into the street. George whirled around on him, his brow furrowed, "I want to go with you."

A jolt of shock ran through Dream, "George...."

"I'm *going* with you, Dream," George repeated, looking stressed, "I don't want to just *sit* here and wait for you to come back, not knowing what's happening."

Dream frowned, "I get that but...you can't George."

Surprise flashed through his eyes before they narrowed, "Why can't I? I didn't realize I needed permission."

"Only certain people can come George. The people that can fight really well," Dream addressed seriously, "You only just started learning to fight. Sappnap doesn't think you should come either."

George's face dropped and his eyes widened with hurt, "What? Neither of you want me to come with you?"

"No! I mean, we do, it's just that we don't want you to get hurt!" Dream pleaded when he realized that George was taking this the wrong way.

"Thank you for that but I know when to be careful," George pressed and Dream sighed, "Dream I *don't* want to just stay behind."

"George, you have to this time," Dream muttered, staring at him intently, "We don't know what this situation will be like. You'll be endangering yourself and I won't *allow* that."

George crossed his arms, "I know enough about fighting to protect myself, Dream. I also know a lot more than you all about healing so I'd be an asset there."

Dream hesitated. That was true. If George went then they'd have someone with them that knew enough about medicine and potions while not leaving no healers in the village.

"Also you, me, and Sapnap are a team, remember?" George smiled and Dream blinked, his eyes going wide for a second, "The Dream Team I think he called it."

Dream laughed, wheezing, "Oh yeah!"

"That means we should stick together," George replied smugly and Dream's laugh died down to chuckles. Sometimes he couldn't believe George.

"Okay, you win. I'll talk to the others," Dream said quickly and gasped when George jumped on him, like full on jumped on him, wrapping his legs around Dream's waist and planting a big kiss on him.

"Thanks Dream!" He beamed right in his face and Dream quickly wrapped his arms around him.

"You're welcome, baby," He grinned toothily before his smile fell, "I'm sorry if I made you sad before. I just can't help being worried about you."

George made a warm face at him, "I know. Me too. That's why I can't stay behind. Plus I want to show you I can be strong too."

Dream smiled and leaned in, pressing a slow gentle kiss on his lips. George tilted his head to avoid the mask and let him, "You *are* strong, baby."

"And you're biased," George giggled and Dream chuckled in disbelief. He wondered if George would ever full understand how great he really is.

"Oh God, please don't have public sex in the middle of the street," Tommy voice drifted to them and Dream heard someone laugh.

George blushed and hopped off Dream, making Dream glare over at Tommy. He realized then that Jack was standing next to him, "Tommy. Jack."

"Dream," Tommy deadpanned before looking at George, "Hello, Gogy!"

"Hello Tommy," George replied, his blush vanishing, "Uh....this is?"

"I'm Jack Manifold!" Jack grinned, thrusting out his hand. George's eyes widened in understanding

and he shook Jack's hand, "Nice to meet ya!"

"Same," George retorted, smiling politely, "What are you both up to?"

"We just came from Nikki's bakery," Tommy grinned, patting his stomach, "Had a couple of cream-filled croissants and tea. It was amazing."

"*Sounds* pretty amazing," Dream nodded and George laughed at the look on his face. Dream looked ready to drool.

"Anyways fellas," Tommy began, looking around, "Have either of you seen Tubbo? I've been trying to keep an eye out for him. He wasn't at home when I came for 'em this morning."

"I haven't seen him," George answered slowly.

"Me either. I've been in a meeting most of the day," Dream shrugged and, to his surprise, Tommy's face soured.

"Well that's just great! He's probably off with *Ranboo* again," Tommy grumbled and Jack nodded, "He's replaced me with Ranboo, I swear! He spends all his free time with him!"

"To be fair....Ranboo could use a good friend right now," George said nonchalantly, however, his eyes were serious. Tommy looked up at him and sighed in defeat.

"I guess so but I have needs as well!" Tommy pouted and Dream rolled his eyes.

"You're just being clingy to Tubbo," Dream claimed, laughing at the disbelief on Tommy's face. Jack laughed as well.

"I'm NOT!" Tommy denied, shaking his head, "I'm just a little worried since I know Schlatt keeps visiting him!"

Dream stopped laughing. That was true. He only felt better knowing Schlatt was constantly being watched. And Tubbo wasn't alone. Maybe he should check on him before going to bed tonight...

"Well boys, I gotta go help Jack and his parents move some shit in their new house. If you see Tubbo tell him to find me," Tommy spoke up and Dream almost jumped at the loud sound of his voice.

"See you later Tommy and Jack," George smiled, waving at them, "If you ever need anything then check for me at the hospital or my home."

Jack looked touched at the gesture and Dream bit the inside of his lip to keep a huge smile from forming. Tommy seemed taken by surprise before he sobered and nodded at George.

"See ya big man," Tommy said to Dream, making him blink at the new nickname. Big man?

"Bye," Dream decided to say and watched the two walk off. They both seemed to be hitting it off as close friends the way Ranboo and Tubbo were.

"Jack does seem like a nice boy," George commented as he stared at their retreating figures. Dream nodded wordlessly. George turned to him, "What now?"

"Well..." Dream trailed off, "I better go track down Techno and Sapnap so I can tell them you're coming."

George's face lit up and it made Dream all warm inside. He gasped when George grabbed two handfuls of his face and pulled him down for a kiss. He was getting kind of amused at how much George apparently didn't want to be left behind.

"Then I'll go keep Bad company and wait for you," George grinned, pushing his glasses on his face. His nose was kind of scrunched up and Dream really wanted to kiss or poke George's nose but he needed to get things done.

"Alright. See you later," Dream vowed, pulling George in for a hug, marveling in the feel of his increased heartbeat and kissing his head. He pulled back and smirked when he caught the slight blush on George's face.

Dream waved George off, waiting until he walked back into the library before setting off to Karl's house to find Sapnap. He was genuinely surprised that the house was empty when he got there. Where did they go?

He doubled back and went into the castle. Dream searched everywhere in the castle and even asked Eret, but neither of them knew where Karl and Sapnap were. He was starting to get frustrated.

Dream wanted to tell Sapnap first to get his reaction out of the way because he knew Technoblade wouldn't mind if George came. Sapnap was weirdly protective of George, but then again so was Dream so he couldn't say anything. He knew Sapnap wouldn't be happy at first that George was coming but he also knew he could talk Sapnap into it.

Dream was just about to head to another location Karl often visited when he saw the tall figure of Ranboo in the corner of his eye. Ranboo was the tallest person he'd ever encountered and was extremely easy to recognize. He was almost 7 foot tall naturally and Dream was sure that had to do with the Endermen half of him.

He frowned when he realized Ranboo was with Tubbo and they were rushing towards the entrance. Why were they going to the *entrance*? They weren't going out were they? Not after what happened to the warrior yesterday.

Dream jogged after them and caught up with them right when they were halfway out of the entrance, "Tubbo! Ranboo!"

Both boys turned when called and Tubbo smiled, "Heya Dream!"

"Where do you think you're going?" Dream questioned, frowning at them. Ranboo shuffled at Tubbo's side, but at least he was looking at Dream instead of avoiding his gaze.

"I was trying to teach Ranboo this ball game but my ball flew over the wall when Ranboo kicked it," Tubbo pouted and Ranboo apologized under his breath, "We're going to find it."

"You know what happened yesterday with that warrior right?" Dream pressed and Ranboo tensed, looking at Tubbo. Tubbo's expression didn't change, still as cheerful as ever.

"Yeah, that was sad, but I want my ball and if someone tries to kill me then I'll kill them," Tubbo claimed as if he were discussing what groceries to get.

Dream's eyes widened as Tubbo continued, "Or Ranboo will protect me, won'tcha big guy?"

Ranboo blinked at him but then he nodded, "Mhm...."

"This is *serious* Tubbo," Dream sighed, but felt inwardly amused that this boy wasn't the least bit wary of getting attacked, "At least let me go with you."

"Sure, if that's what you want!" Tubbo exclaimed with a big smile, "Let's goooo!"

Ranboo and Dream shared a look but followed him the rest of the way out of the village entrance. There were not many trees, just an open field but Dream kept eyeing the trees in the distance, his hand twitching and ready to grab his diamond axe on his back.

Dream knew he was being too paranoid but it was better to be safe than sorry and he'd feel like crap if something happened to Ranboo and Tubbo when he knew they went out and did nothing.

"Aww, it fell in the pond!" Tubbo complained as they walked further out and closer to the woods. Dream flicked his green eyes to Ranboo when the taller tensed at the word *pond*. Then he realized Ranboo probably got hurt by water just like Endermen, "Why'd you kick it so hard Ranboo?!"

"You told me to kick it with everything I had," Ranboo replied in a simple manner, "So it's your fault."

"What?!" Tubbo gasped, outraged, but then his face broke out into a small smile, "Well, I guess I did say that."

Dream felt amused and a bit surprised by how Ranboo was acting around Tubbo. He'd never seen this part of Ranboo before. He turned his gaze back to Tubbo when the smaller male went closer to the pond and unflinching walked in halfway to grab the ball.

"Were you teaching him kick ball or something?" Dream questioned and Tubbo grinned, nodding his head eagerly.

"Yup! He's never played it before!"

"Well, I mean I don't *know* if I have," Ranboo interrupted but Tubbo ignored him.

"I wanna make sure he gets to experience anything he's missed out on!" Tubbo continued and Dream caught the smile that blossomed on Ranboo's bi-colored face before he concealed it. That was cute. Tubbo looked down at the ball and added softly, "Tommy did the same for me when I first came here."

Dream blinked, "That's quite nice of him."

"You sound surprised," Tubbo teased and Dream chuckled, "Tommy's a big ole softie around me! I just bring that out in people!"

Dream and Ranboo shared a laugh when he fluttered his eyelashes at that last sentence. Then Tubbo joined them in laughing. Dream thought back on Tommy's words earlier, "You should go see him and Jack after this. Tommy's missed you."

Tubbo seemed genuinely surprised, "Really? But he's been spending all his free time with Jack Manifold!"

Dream blurted out laughter at how similar the two thought and his laugh turned into a wheeze. Ranboo's eyes widened at him like he thought Dream was dying and Tubbo seemed confused, "S-Still....go see him after this."

"Well I guess we could use more people for our game," Ranboo suggested hesitantly.

"Sure!" Tubbo nodded and Ranboo relaxed. It seemed his comfort in himself still needed some work. Dream took a deep breath, already wishing he could tell George and Sapnap about this.

"You know, I always thought birch trees were..."

Dream tuned Tubbo out when he thought he saw something in the trees surrounding the pond. He narrowed his gaze into that one spot but he didn't see any movement.

He saw the glint right before it happened and didn't have time to do anything before an arrow was shot right towards them. It was either poorly aimed or intentional because it hit right behind Tubbo.

Ranboo blanched and Tubbo's face dropped. Dream drew his sword, "Get back to the village. They can't do anything with all of us if we make it there."

"If?" Ranboo whispered in horror and they all jumped into action when several arrows were shot at them. Dream grabbed Ranboo's arm and pushed him in front of him, making sure they were both with him as they tried to run back to the village entrance.

They were just about in view of the entrance when something glass fell in front of them and broke open. Dream gasped at the familiar smell and jerked both boys to a stop before they could step in it. Definitely a potion of harming. How the hell!?

"It's the pillagers," Tubbo hissed and Dream noticed with despair that neither of them were armed, just Dream himself. Dream nudged them around the puddle of harming solution, but a fire arrow hit the grass in front of them and they jerked to a stop again.

The fire quickly started to try and spread. Dream cursed under his breath and only hoped that the warriors manning the wall or the entrance could notice and help them.

The pillagers pursuing them came to a stop right in front of them and surrounded them. They were careful not to get close to the puddle of harming or the fire arrow.

"Stay behind me," Dream ordered the two boys behind him. He was surprised when Tubbo ducked down and rolled up his pants to grab a large dagger from his boot. Ranboo looked floored.

"Never leave home without a hidden weapon," Tubbo smiled, but his eyes were dark and serious. Dream kept his eyes on the pillagers closing in on them.

"We've been hoping to get you alone," A pillager spoke up and a few sneered at Dream, who kept his face neutral just to piss them off omre, "Boss really wants you dead but I'll be honest, I don't

feel like trying."

"Sure *seems* like you do," Tubbo gritted out and Dream inwardly agreed.

"I'll give you the opportunity to at least try it if you let the kids go back unharmed," Dream offered, trying to think of ways to keep the boys from getting hurt.

"Excuse me?" Tubbo gasped, offended and even Ranboo made a disagreeing noise.

"No can do," A pillager spoke up beside the first one, "We want the halfling and once we take him we can't have witnesses."

Dream tensed and he could have sworn he heard a weird warble come from Ranboo, "You can't take *anyone* from our village."

"Watch us," The pillager snarled and Dream bared his teeth, pointing his axe towards the pillager when he stepped closer.

"You have to get through me to do it. And good luck with that," Dream growled out and he saw Tubbo press closer in the corner of his eye, "You're near the entrance of the village and our people will see us here, its a matter of time."

The first pillager seemed like he was considering it, but another pillager spoke up, "We've been hiding forever now, waiting for this opportunity for too long. We weren't even sure the halfling would leave the walls so we *have* to do this now! Boss really wants the halfling."

Tubbo froze for some reason and Ranboo shifted around uneasily. Another pillager spoke, "We know that we could probably take him before Technoblade knows or Philza. And we know that they're planning a mission to destroy the base."

Dream stopped, his eyes widening. How the hell did they know that?! Did someone-

"Let's take our chances with this one," The second pillager jeered, gesturing to Dream, "We need the halfling's powers to get Ender pearls from Endermen. Just like Boss said. And we can kill two birds with one stone and kill the smiley-faced man."

Ranboo suspiciously muttered something like, '*That's not how it works*' under his breath but Dream was more focused on the pillagers trying to get closer then again, glaring at Dream warily.

"How do we know he's actually half Endermen?" Yet another pillager spoke up, "Boss seems confident due to the nether group's words but what if they were exaggerating?"

"Let's test it then," The first pillager shrugged and brought out a canteen. Dream tensed, ready for anything. He was surprised, however, when he threw the contents at them.

Droplets of water hit them and Dream heard the sizzle of smoke before saw it. Ranboo cried out in pain and rubbed at his skin. Dream's heart fell into his stomach when the pillager's started murmuring to themselves.

Then Tubbo suddenly roared and charged at the first pillager he saw, his eyes blank with rage. Dream remembered what he said about his violent headspace and immediately leapt into action.

The first pillager he engaged blocked his axe swing and Dream felt distracted when he heard a loud smack of fist on skin. Tubbo didn't even have time to cry out or gasp before he hit the ground, out cold.

Dream paled and was about to launch himself backwards to cover Tubbo but an inhuman screech filled the air and didn't stop. Dream looked towards Ranboo and broke out into a cold sweat, fear and confusion filling him.

Ranboo suddenly looked as if he grew a foot taller, and the eye that used to be green was glowing purple, purple particles falling off of him as his jaw detached far further than normal for a human. Then Dream noticed Ranboo had sharp fangs.

Ranboo screeched into some kind of weird roar and near-teleported to the pillager that knocked out Tubbo. Dream's heart leapt into his throat when the pillager screamed before Ranboo twisted his head all the way around with a simple easy twist.

Dream could barely process what just happened before Ranboo was finishing off all the pillagers surrounding them. In the distant, he heard the village's warning bell going off which meant that the warriors manning the wall or the entrance must have spotted them.

Dream realized he couldn't stop Ranboo as he rampaged and went to kneel down next to Tubbo. There was a purple splotch already darkening as a lump on Tubbo's head. The imprint of a ring was there in his skin and Dream's eyes flicked to the pillager's hand.

There was nothing he could really do for Tubbo, so Dream looked back at Ranboo, who cornered the last pillager. He watched with morbid fascination as the pillager tried to apologize but Ranboo picked him up and slammed him against a tree numerous times until he was dead.

After they were all on the ground Ranboo seemed to be calming down. His eye eventually went back to green, he returned to normal size, and the particles left as he slowly caught his breath.

Ranboo's eyes went uncloudy and he looked around, his eyes widening. His gaze locked onto a

wordless Dream and all Dream could see was despair, "I....I did this didn't I? Oh god....not again..."

Again? Dream was briefly intrigued but frowned, "Hey, you're okay right?"

"I just killed.....they-" Ranboo stammered, half warbles coming out of his mouth as his hands shook. He looked ready to cry, poor thing, "That was bad I-"

"You didn't do anything wrong," Dream announced intently and Ranboo looked at him wildly, "You protected yourself and you protected your friend. They would have captured you and killed us."

Ranboo nodded and seemed to be calming down. Then he paused and Dream rose an eyebrow, "Y- You're right. I protected my *friends*..."

Dream's eyes widened at the intentional inclusion of him and then he smiled, feeling a bit touched that Ranboo thought that way. Ranboo frowned and got closer, "He hit Tubbo pretty hard....he went out no problem. Concussion?"

"Definitely," Dream winced as he looked at the lump on his head again. Both boys tensed when they heard distant yelling but realized it was warriors running towards them from the entrance. The village bell was still ringing in the background.

"Ugh...."

Ranboo and Dream whirled around at a pillager coming to, apparently severely injured and bleeding but not dead like the others. Dream immediately handed Tubbo off to Ranboo and got up. He bent over the pillager and put his axe to his neck. The pillager froze.

"You're coming with us. I want to know *exactly* how you knew we had a plan to attack your base," Dream growled and the pillager's eyes widened, "Who told you about it?"

The pillager remained silent. That just wasn't going to do. Dream realized that the pillager might not ever tell him and he might even die of his injuries even if he might. He needed to know now. He was honestly freaked out when he heard they knew all about the plan when only trusted people knew minus Schlatt.

Dream resigned himself and leaned down closer to the pillager and whispered in his ear, "Look, if you don't tell me then I'll have to resort to torturing you. Do you like being burned and your fingernails peeled? I really don't want to have to do that to you. And that's the mild stuff."

The pillager paled, his face falling but Dream's words worked. The pillager opened his mouth hesitantly, "I-I've been dressing myself up as a villager and sneaking in the camp. I'd l-listen in on

conversations and I heard someone talking to another about a plan. I kept coming back until I learned more."

"So no one told you? You wouldn't lie to me right?" Dream narrowed his eyes and apparently he really was more intimidating than he knew because the pillager struggled so hard to speak he almost choked on his spit.

"N-No! I pr-promise! It was me and one other but your halfling killed him. We just blended right in with the other villagers and heard a lot!" The pillager pleaded, "D-Don't torture me I can't handle fire or pain real well and-"

Dream tuned him out, speechless. He can't handle fire but they had a base in the nether? He can't handle pain but he's capable of dishing it out? Dream felt so angry he could spit fire. The pillager must have noticed because he continued begging for his life.

The village warriors reached them then and Dream ignored the pleading villager in favor of explaining the situation. The warriors went to help Tubbo but Ranboo simply gathered Tubbo in his arms and stood up.

Dream turned back to the pillager, "One last thing, did your group attack the warrior yesterday?"

The pillager paused and then meekly nodded. Several warriors gasped in outrage. Dream turned to a couple of warriors, "Drag him back with us and take him to the prison."

They nodded and a couple of them tied his hands. Dream was mildly surprised that they didn't even question taking orders from him, but at the moment he was more concerned with getting Tubbo to the hospital.

"The bell's still going off, is Techno or Eret coming?" Dream asked as the two warriors began taking the pillager away. Dream beckoned Ranboo to follow him and paused only a moment to grab the ball Tubbo wanted so badly.

"They should be. The bell is only rung in emergencies," A warrior answered him and Dream nodded.

They made it back to the entrance and Dream allowed himself a sigh of relief. Then he noticed a growing pool of people gathering towards the entrance or running to get into their homes. Then he saw Techno, Eret, and Wilbur pushing through the people, fully armed.

They stopped immediately when they saw Ranboo and Dream there and Wilbur gasped when he saw Tubbo in Ranboo's arms, "What the hell happened?!"

"We've been trying to figure out what's going on!" Eret stumbled over Wilbur's words, looking speechless as he stared at them. Techno merely scowled a dark look to his eyes as he watched the pillager being taken on ahead.

Dream explained everything that happened and patted Ranboo on the back when the taller tensed when Dream described how he attacked them. Techno seemed interested while Wilbur seemed stunned and Eret seemed worried.

"Let's get him to the hospital," Techno decided and Dream nodded, following the trio along as the murmuring crowd parted for them.

Dream jolted when he saw George and Sapnap running towards them. George's eyes widened when he saw Dream and all but launched himself at him, Sapnap not far behind. Dream immediately opened his arms.

"What happened?" George asked quietly, looking over in horror at Tubbo. Dream urged them to keep moving but Sapnap stuck close to them. Dream explained things quietly while they remained just as speechless as Wilbur had been.

They made it to the hospital and Dream winced every time George squeezed his hand hard like he was trying to remind himself that Dream wasn't captured. He decided he'd have to wait to comfort George, making sure Tubbo was okay took precedence.

Upon entering, Ponk looked over confusion but then his eyes darkened when he saw Tubbo, "What happened exactly?"

Dream was surprised when Ranboo took the lead, launching into the details and laying Tubbo down on the cot. Wilbur and Techno immediately took one side. Dream stayed a bit back to give them space along with the others.

Ponk barely had the chance to check Tubbo when the doors burst open. George and Sapnap jumped and Dream realized they were both latched onto him. Tommy rushed through the doors panting for breath. Phil was with him.

Tommy choked on his breath when he saw Tubbo on the cot. He practically flew across the room, standing beside Ranboo as he leaned over to check Tubbo, "I-I heard it was the pillagers?"

Dream launched into the story yet again and noticed how Philza sported an angry, dark expression that didn't match well with him. Tommy's eyes lit up in rage, "How dare they hurt 'em! They're lucky I wasn't there! I would have torn them to shreds too!"

Ranboo made a half-choked warble, his eyes creasing in distress at the reminder of what he did. Tommy looked at him confused but luckily he didn't comment on it. Ponk spoke up, "It's just a

concussion, a nasty one, but he'll be fine with rest and healing potions."

"That's good," Wilbur sighed, putting a hand on his chest. Ranboo and Tommy deflated with relief.

"I'm not sure if I believe that he just worked alone," Eret frowned, staring around the room as he spoke of the pillager.

"Me either but it *would* be possible to sneak in," Phil said seriously as he messed with one of his bandages, "It's not like we know the faces of every single villager. They could have blended in."

Dream nodded seriously, "He swears he and one other that died worked alone."

Everyone turned when the doors to the hospital opened again and Dream felt a jolt of anger burn through him at the sight of Schlatt standing there. He looked at everyone in the room with wide eyes and he was panting just like Tommy had, as if he had run from wherever he came. There were several guards shadowing him from behind though, so that made Dream feel better.

Dream tensed when Techno drew his sword and launched across the room, slamming Schlatt against the wall with the sword pointed at his throat in his other hand. Everyone in the room went silent with shock.

"T-This is the second time this happened," Schlatt choked out, but he almost look like he didn't care. His eyes slid to the side and locked onto Tubbo, "What happened? How did he get hurt? I heard about pillagers?"

"I *bet* you heard," Techno snarled, pressing closer, "Have you been telling them things, Schlatt? I swear to God if you have..."

Schlatt's eyes went wider and he looked at everyone again, however, everyone just stared at him, waiting for an answer, "No! I al-already told you I haven't!"

"They knew about our plans! Plans which only a *few* knew!" Techno roared and George flinched behind Dream, pressing closer to him. Dream leaned his weight against him.

Schlatt went quiet, raising an eyebrow and Dream thought he was either a really good actor or he was genuinely shocked and confused, "I've been watched twenty four seven. I have alarms on me in case I leave the village. How could I do that?"

"You'd find a way," Sapnap scoffed and Dream frowned thoughtfully.

"Well I *didn't*. I'm here for Tubbo," Schlatt said lowly, "I thought maybe I could mend

relationships, but you lot seem to not be able to let anything go. Tubbo's been supportive though."

"It takes time to mend relationships," Wilbur claimed, crossing his arms and Dream scoffed this time.

"And it helps not to go around bashing people's self-confidence," Dream grumbled sourly, still upset about what he did to George. George pressed even closer and whispered how he was okay now.

"I'm sorry about that," Schlatt began, his eyes flicking to Dream and George before he looked back at Techno, "I didn't have anything to do with this though. I hate the pillagers just as much as you do."

"Sure," Tommy growled out, "Maybe your plan with the pillagers backfired and it got Tubbo hurt so now you're feelin' guilty?"

"I'd *never* hurt Tubbo!" Schlatt shouted, looking increasingly frustrated. Techno searched his gaze and dropped him. Schlatt rubbed his neck with a wince.

"It's true he's been watched the whole time and he did nothing," A warrior from outside the hospital reported and Techno just nodded.

"Fine Schlatt," Techno said in a grumble, "But if I *ever* find out you were involved then you will die."

Schlatt said nothing and looked over at Tubbo again, "Is....is he okay?"

"Just a concussion," Ponk replied quietly, "He'll be fine in a couple of days."

"How did this happen?" Schlatt asked, his eyes narrowing in anger that Dream recognized. He had to give it to Schlatt, he really did care about Tubbo.

"I'll tell you," Dream sighed and launched into the details yet again. To his credit, Schlatt didn't interrupt him once or make any faces. When he was finished, Schlatt looked over at Ranboo.

"Tubbo is right, you *are* pretty interesting," Schlatt commented like he was commenting on the color of a dress. Ranboo blinked, surprised, "Thank you."

Everyone looked at each other and Dream moved his arm to grab George's hand, smiling at him. George smiled back, looking a little more relieved now that the tension in the room was dying down.

Ranboo looked bashful and almost uncomfortable, "It's.... uh....you're welcome..."

Tommy watched Schlatt the entire time with narrowed eyes and tensed when Schlatt moved closer to Tubbo. Techno followed behind closely, but he leaned against the wall and pinned his gaze to Schlatt.

"Well," Phil cleared his throat, "Now that we know Tubbo's okay, we should talk about how this 'Boss' of the pillagers probably know we're coming."

"He doesn't know we're coming with *explosives* and other weapons," Wilbur retorted cheekily, grinning with teeth. Dream and Sapnap chuckled.

"True," Eret laughed out, "And everything's been settled. Should we proceed in a couple of days, Techno?"

"Definitely," Techno monotoned and his eyes flicked to Tubbo, "They don't get away scotch free for everything they've done."

"*Preach!*" Sapnap shouted and George giggled. Dream smiled at him.

"Whose all comin' on this mission?" Tommy asked warily. Techno gave him a look.

"It'll be me, Dream, Sapnap, Schlatt, Wilbur, Skeppy, Puffy, Purpled, and about 20 warriors," Techno announced and Tommy glared at him.

"Oh, add George to that list," Dream called out casually. Sapnap tensed and Ponk looked over at them in surprise. Techno blinked at him, "It'll be helpful to have him with us since he knows more medical knowledge than we do."

Just like he thought, Techno was sold on the idea immediately, "Alright."

"And why am *I* not coming?" Tommy ground out, sounding like he was speaking through gritted teeth. Phil placed a hand on his shoulder and Wilbur looked away thoughtfully.

"Tommy, you see Tubbo?" Techno gestured to the small blonde still motionless on the cot. Tommy tensed, "This happened because some of the pillagers came directly here to attack, capture, and spy on us again."

"We need to be here to protect the village," Phil murmured, squeezing his shoulder when Tommy nodded, looking defeated.

"I'll blow a lot of them up for you Tommy," Wilbur grinned and Dream almost laughed out loud at the psychotic claim of brotherly love. Tommy's eyes lit up though which was even more amusing.

"You will? You can't leave *any* of them alive!" Tommy said quickly and Wilbur nodded, "They'll just keep coming back otherwise."

"We'll make sure they get what's coming to them," Techno promised and Tommy cheered, looking a little bit better with his brothers' reassurances.

"I need to go speak with the warriors," Eret spoke up, sighing like he was exhausted, "They need to be up to date and know the mission is still on."

"Thank you," Techno nodded and spared a glance at Schlatt, who was still silent the whole time.

After Eret left, everyone settled into their spots in the hospital, waiting for Tubbo to wake up. Well, *almost* everyone. Dream felt a tug on his arm and met the unsettled gaze of Sapnap. He did not look happy.

Dream briefly glanced at George to see him avoiding Sapnap's heated stare. Dream internally sighed. Time to get that over with, "Guess we'll head out too."

"Thanks for today," Techno nodded while Phil and Wilbur smiled gratefully at him. Dream smiled back and gave a meaningful look to Ranboo before dragging George and Sapnap out of the hospital with him.

Sapnap let go and got in front of them, glaring at both of them like his protective best friend button was just pushed. They were in for a long discussion.

Chapter End Notes

Awww there were so many good moments despite the pillagers coming in!
a lot of writers write Schlatt as a villain, which I obviously understand, but I love the idea that he's just a troubled person that can be redeemed eventually.

I k

Anyways, I appreciate any feedback you give! I look forward to see what you all have to say! If you're confused about anything then let me know! ☺

Chapter 29

Chapter Summary

The day of the mission arrives. Tommy and Tubbo make a mischievous decision with dramatic results. George watches it all go down.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Sorry the delay again! I took quite some time off for myself. I also just got over a cold. I don't usually get sick but I'm just thankful it wasn't Covid!

Thank you everyone that wishes me well! You guys are flippin' awesome I hope you know! Also, I'm floored by how much people like my story. There's almost 250 bookmarks and 32k hits, like good lord...

Also, I'm such a sucker for Ranboo and Tubbo friendship. Like their connection is so cute and their Dream SMP characters are my favorites, I won't lie! I also love the Benchtrio's dynamic (which is Tubbo, Tommy, and Ranboo in case you didn't know!) So I'm sorry that you're seeing so much of them if you don't like them as much! 🥺🥺

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George could almost feel himself start sweating at Sapnap's heated stare. Dream told him before how Sapnap said he didn't want George to come but George didn't think it was *that* big of a deal to the other. Dream let out a sigh.

"Sapnap-"

"I thought we both agreed that George shouldn't come with us!" Sapnap exclaimed instantly, crossing his arms and almost tapping his foot. George felt a pang of annoyance run through him at his words. He didn't need anyone's permission to do things he wanted to do. Yet they both acted like he did sometimes.

"I did...at first," Dream began tensely, "But George-"

"Talked you into it? Clearly," Sapnap frowned and George sent a glare his way.

"It'll be helpful if he comes, dude," Dream said with a degree of annoyance to his tone. George was glad he wasn't the only one annoyed.

"I get that it's because he's a cleric but he's not even a full-fledged one!" Sapnap argued and George felt a bit hurt by his words. Whispers of all his insecurities of being useless went through his head all at once but he forced himself to not dwell on it.

"That doesn't mean I can't be helpful," George muttered and the hurt must have been noticeable in his tone because they both looked at him. Sapnap's eyes widened a bit.

"I mean, I know that George but you...." Sapnap cut himself off, scowling, "You shouldn't be putting yourself in danger by coming."

"*You're both* putting yourselves in danger by going," George retorted angrily and Sapnap opened his mouth to say something but George didn't let him, "Besides, you both don't control my actions! I'm going! I can take care of myself just as I have been before I *ever* met you both!"

Sapnap was practically fuming and Dream actually looked uncomfortable, switching between looking at them both. George frowned, continuing in a softer tone, "Why does it matter so much to you, Sap? Dream doesn't care that I'm going..."

Sapnap faltered at that and sighed, staring at the ground in some kind of defeat, "I'm not trying to be a dick....it's just.....when I think about what happened in the pillager's nether base-"

George felt the color drain from his face, almost *feeling* the heat suffocating him just by the memory of the sweat box. Dream and Sapnap looked at him in concern until it finally hit George. Sapnap was genuinely concerned for George's wellbeing. It's not that he thought George couldn't handle himself. He was worried that the same things might occur as they did before.

"I'll be careful to make sure nothing like that happens again," George swallowed and then smiled hesitantly, attempting to lighten the mood, "Besides you guys'll be by my side."

Sapnap seemed a bit more appeased and relieved that he'd gotten that off his chest. He grinned, "That's true....but you'll not be reckless right?"

"*I'm* not the one you need to be worried about regarding that," George scoffed, crossing his arms and giving Dream an obvious stare. Sapnap laughed and turned to stare at him as well. Dream sputtered and scowled.

"I'm....I'm not! I *won't* be!" Dream growled while George and Sapnap chuckled in amusement when his cheeks tinted pink.

George turned back to Sapnap, "Besides, it feels wrong staying behind while you two go. We're supposed to be the Dream Team right?"

Sapnap looked startled before a slow grin spread across his face. He closed his eyes and laughed, shaking his head, "Right...I didn't forget that."

"Sure," Dream drawled, eyeing Sapnap, who flipped him off, "So we're cool now right? No more tantrums?"

"You're such an asshole," Sapnap frowned but the words were without real venom so George couldn't help but laugh, "But no, I feel better now."

"That's good," George grinned until an idea hit him, "You guys obviously know more about the mission than me. How about we go to one of our houses to talk about it more?"

"Really?" Dream blinked, looking at him. Sapnap had a thoughtful look on his face.

"Yeah, I don't really know the details on what you guys are planning on doing. So tell me," George shrugged and Dream suddenly shared a smirk with Sapnap.

"I think you'll like our many ideas~!" Sapnap singed as he hooked arms with George's. Dream laughed at the wide-eyed, startled, look on George's face.

An hour of talking through the general idea of the plan passed. From George's understanding, most of the plan was vague due to not knowing what to expect when they arrived at the pillager's main base. There was a general understanding, however, that they would be blowing up the base, killing or capturing the pillagers for justice, and collecting any useful items.

There was also an expectation that there *could* be prisoners held there and George winced at the look on Sapnap's face at that. Sapnap always looked so unlike himself whenever the mention of captors, kidnapping victims, or the pillagers were brought up. The manic look in his eyes was one George hoped not to see too often.

They'd just started relaxing after that hour of conversation when Quackity and Karl knocked on their door. Apparently they passed the hospital and Tubbo was beginning to wake up. George was concerned for the small male, but he noticed Dream fidgeting in that cute way he did when he got angsty so George suggested to go see him.

Sapnap decided to stay behind with Quackity and Karl to tell them more about the mission to fill in the gaps of things they didn't know. George told them to make themselves at home and left it at that. Dream grabbed his hand and squeezed but both didn't have anything to say as they walked back to the hospital.

Upon entering, both George and Dream noticed that Phil and his sons were still there with Ranboo. Schlatt didn't seem to be around for whatever reason. Tubbo was awake and leaning against some

pillows as Tommy talked his mouth off loudly about something but he abruptly stopped when George and Dream fully entered the room.

Tubbo's eyes lit up at the sight of them, or maybe just at Dream who knows, and George noticed Dream smile in relief, "Dream! George!"

"You okay, Tubbo?" Dream asked softly as he walked closer, pulling George along with him as if he refused to let go of his hand. George didn't comment on it and just let himself be pulled along.

Tubbo very obviously stopped before he nodded his head. He smiled back at the pair, "Yup, I don't have a headache anymore because of Ponk's potions!"

"That's good," George said, relieved. The small lump on Tubbo's head was colored an assortment of purple.

"He has a grade I concussion," Phil spoke up softly and they looked at him, "It's not as bad as Ponk first thought."

"Which means he'll be on his feet by tomorrow!" Tommy grinned, putting his arm around Tubbo's shoulders, who looked just as excited as his friend did.

"I can't wait! I can't stand being confined to a bed!" Tubbo pouted while Phil chuckled at him.

"Tough," Wilbur grinned and then laughed when Tubbo glared at him. Then he looked at Dream again.

"Sorry about what happened though...you told me I shouldn't go out and I did anyways," Tubbo frowned thoughtfully, his eyes flicking off in a certain direction. George followed his eyesight and realized he kept glancing at Ranboo in the corner, "I dragged you and Ranboo in a stupid fight."

Ranboo winced and Dream rose an eyebrow, barely visible with his mask in the way, "It's not your fault Tubbo. You should be able to do what you want in your own village. It's those pillagers' fault."

Techno nodded along without realizing, making Phil grin at him. Ranboo looked at Dream at his words then. Tommy scowled, "He's right, Tubbo! I'm glad Ranboo finished most of them off or I would have!"

Tubbo glanced at Ranboo again, frowning when he noticed the way the tallest male hunched in on himself, "Yeah..."

Wilbur noticed the constant glancing, "Are you okay, Ranboo?"

Ranboo just nodded, avoiding Tubbo's stare and Tommy snorted rolling his eyes and pulling Tubbo closer with the arm around his shoulders, "Don't know why you're being so touchy about tearing those bastards to shreds when they deserved it."

"Tommy!" Phil scolded, looking almost shocked. Ranboo's eyes widened and he paled, the poor guy. Tubbo's eyes widened as well.

"Well they *did*!" Tommy snapped, looking at the ground angrily, "Always tryin' to hurt one of us and sometimes succeeding!"

He gestured to Phil's bandages and Tubbo's head. Wilbur grimaced and George squeezed Dream's hand when he went still. Tommy turned to Ranboo, "You should be *proud* you got rid of those psycho, kidnapping, child-selling mother-f!"

"*Tommy!*" Phil cried out, trying to interrupt his cursing. Ranboo blinked heavily at Tommy.

"That's one way of putting it," Techno said awkwardly and George couldn't help the hysterical giggle that escaped his mouth.

Tubbo just frowned and looked between Tommy and Ranboo before his face fell, "I know you don't like conflict, Ranboo. I'm sorry...."

George felt confused when Ranboo suddenly looked panicked, his hands waving as he hurried to speak, "No I-, that's true but I...it's not your fault Tubbo! I just sometimes-"

"Ranboo," Techno sighed, putting a hand on the tallest male's shoulder to stop his gesturing as Tubbo and Tommy rose an eyebrow at Ranboo, "Chill, take it one word at a time."

"I...I, urm, o-okay," Ranboo stammered out, grasping his shirt tightly in his hands, his face a mess of anxiety, "So I, um, when I'm super stressed out or emotional, I sometimes go into this sleepwalking-like state, I call it enderwalking....and I..."

He paused glancing at everyone. George hoped he had on a supportive face, he was mostly curious at what the younger was trying to say. Tubbo just tilted his head at him, patiently. Ranboo's shoulders fell, "And I get aggressive...sometimes...and that's what happened I think."

"Oh..." Tubbo said slowly, blinking as if he were struggling to digest the information.

"So you sleepwalk and get mean?" Tommy retorted and Phil shot his youngest a look.

"K-Kind of? When I get out of enderwalking I can't remember what I did..." Ranboo confessed, arms hugging himself. George felt his heart go out to him.

"That's terrible," Wilbur frowned, looking put off. Techno nodded in agreement.

"You don't seem like an aggressive person though," Dream stated suddenly and Ranboo looked up at him uncertainly, "And earlier you were only like that because that guy knocked out Tubbo."

"I...yeah...that's never happened before," Ranboo muttered and Tommy shared a glance with Tubbo.

"Is that why you like to carry around a notebook for your memories?" Phil asked softly and Ranboo nodded, "Makes sense. Don't worry, mate. We don't think differently of you. I doubt you're as aggressive as you think you are."

"I agree," George spoke up and Ranboo looked a bit misty-eyed. There seemed to be more he was holding back but George definitely understood keeping some things to yourself. That's probably why Ranboo didn't tell them about his 'enderwalking' until now.

"You just keep getting more interesting, Ranboo," Tubbo chuckled as if not an ounce of what Ranboo said bothered him. Tommy couldn't help but chuckle when Ranboo looked at Tubbo like he were crazy.

"Is that why you looked like that when you were attacking the pillagers?" Dream questioned, a serious look in his green eyes. Ranboo winced, looking away from Tubbo to nod at Dream.

"Well I don't really get bigger when I'm enderwalking. That only happens with anger or rage," Ranboo sighed, looking uncomfortable, "But just for the record, if you ever see me and my eyes are purple, then that means I'm enderwalking."

"Ah, that'll be easy to recognize then," Wilbur nodded, a thoughtful look on his face, "Cheer up Ranboo, don't you feel better now that you've told us?"

"A little? I guess...." Ranboo whispered and everyone looked over at the sound of hand hitting something. Tubbo was patting the space at his other side and looking expectantly over at Ranboo.

George, Phil, and Wilbur all laughed at Ranboo's flabbergasted face, like he wasn't expecting Tubbo to want him so close. Tubbo narrowed his eyes at him and patted the spot harder, only then did Ranboo get moving. Phil immediately moved to give him the room and they watched him sit beside Tubbo awkwardly while Tommy laughed at him the entire time.

"Anyway," Techno turned, immediately steering the attention elsewhere which George found absolutely hilarious, "I am gonna go check over some things. Phil, come with me."

Phil blinked at him but nodded nonetheless. Techno turned to Dream, "You too."

Dream said nothing but squeezed George's hand. George bit back a frown for some reason and eventually let go of Dream's hand so he could follow Phil and Techno out of the hospital.

Once they left, Wilbur poked George's arm to get his attention and George rose an eyebrow at him, "How's things going with that guy?"

"Oh, they're good," George smiled, though confused by the sudden question and Wilbur grinned.

"What's he like when it's just you two?" Tubbo questioned curiously and both Tommy and Ranboo looked at him for an answer as well.

George hesitated, not sure what to say so he decided to tell the truth but keeping some things to himself, "Dream's..... *really* cheesy."

Tommy and Wilbur broke out into startled laughter, like they really weren't expecting him to say that. Tubbo didn't seem all that surprised for some reason and Ranboo looked content to just silently listen and watch them.

"Of course he is!" Tommy laughed out, moving his arm from around Tubbo's shoulders to hold himself.

"He's really different with you, like super happy," Tubbo observed with an odd amount of seriousness, "I guess cause you're dating...is dating *that* fun?"

Everyone in the room seemed stunned by the question but then Tommy immediately narrowed his eyes, "No, Tubbo."

"No?" Tubbo blinked over at his tall blonde friend and Wilbur chuckled.

"No dating for you. They have to get my permission anyways," Tommy declared and George couldn't help but laugh at that. Tommy was acting like Tubbo's dad.

"I'm not going to date, boss man," Tubbo laughed, amused at his friend, "I'm just curious cause people that are dating seem so much happier than people that aren't."

"I don't know about *that*," Wilbur said with a degree of seriousness.

George just smiled and listened to the talk before Ponk stepped in the room, heard what they were talking about, and quietly retreated back to where he came. This made George laugh harder than he had in awhile.

After that, the rest of the plans for the mission went by smoothly. Everyone quickly tied up loose ends and spent time with those they cared about before the day of the mission arrived. Sapnap, Karl, and Quackity spent a lot of time with Dream and George in their shared home going over things that would hopefully work out during the mission as well as just generally hanging out. George found, as usual, that he liked Karl and Quackity's company a lot. Together with Sapnap and Dream, they came up with jokes that had most of them rolling on the floor in tears.

The day before the mission, George walked into the hospital and with Ponk's assistance, picked out various medical supplies to take on the mission. George was surprised with how much Ponk let him take and realized that Ponk was worried in his own way. George also noticed Tubbo coming in for a checkup with Ranboo and Tommy behind him looking like two super tall bodyguards, especially Ranboo with his suit and tie. George had a good laugh to himself about that despite the fact that all three boys were uncharacteristically quiet.

That night before mission was also one where Dream was oddly clingier than usual, always holding George's hand, hugging him, or cuddling him. George woke up the morning of the mission with Dream literally laying on top of him, hugging him like he were hugging a pillow. Dream was extremely heavy and George was mildly surprised he wasn't suffocated in his sleep somehow.

After Dream woke up, they cleaned up and dressed for the mission. George wore his favorite blue logo hoodie and jeans, donning on his diamond armor and strapping on a sheath for a diamond sword and bow Dream got him before. Dream wore his favorite hoodie under his diamond armor as well and black jeans. George noticed him strapping on black fingerless gloves that shouldn't have made him look hotter somehow but it did....

They met up with Sapnap, said a final goodbye to Karl and Quackity, and met up with the others at the front entrance. Technoblade was already there, of course, with Phil and Wilbur. He was directing warriors into several different horses and a couple of carriages carrying all the supplies.

Puffy was there and gave them all a warm good morning. Bad looked to be getting emotional with a frantic Skeppy and Purpled seemed to be watching them in amusement. George's eyes found Schlatt off to the side, holding a horse and he looked strangely resigned as he looked around. George realized he was looking for Tubbo.

"Anything I can help with?" George's attention was caught by Dream walking up to Technoblade, unintentionally interrupting his conversation with Eret, whom George didn't even notice until then.

"Ah, you can get horses for you, George, and Sapnap ready," Techno told him and George watched his boyfriend nod eagerly and take off towards the stables. Sapnap tore off and followed after him, leaving George awkwardly watching the others talk.

"Where's Tommy?" Wilbur asked curiously, peering over at Phil who frowned a little, leaning on one side.

"I asked him to come with me but he's pouting in his room," Phil sighed tiredly and Techno snorted while Wilbur also sighed.

"I thought he was over it since the other day and felt better about it," Wilbur scowled and Phil shrugged.

"Well you know him. He wants in on the action," Phil retorted and crossed his arms, "Anyways, you'll contact me if you need help, right?"

"Of course Phil," Techno assured and Phil looked a bit relieved at that, nodding his head, "Eret has a communicator that Sam made, so he'll let you know if we send messages."

"Check in, alright mate?" Phil frowned at him and George felt awkward watching them so he tore his eyes towards Bad and Skeppy.

"Skeppy, promise me you won't get hurt!" Bad urged, looking on the verge of tears. Skeppy still had a panicked look about him.

"Of course Bad! I'll be careful!" Skeppy said in a pleading tone, "Don't be upset! I'll be back before you know it!"

"I'll keep Skeppy safe, Bad," Purpled teased, winking over at the smaller male. Bad blinked over at him but actually looked relieved, making George chuckle to himself when Skeppy heatedly said he could take care of himself.

"George...."

George whirled around at the familiar voice and looked up at the tall figure of Ranboo. It almost hurt his neck to look up at the taller male, "Ranboo!"

Ranboo smiled hesitantly, "Um, be careful on the mission..."

George's heart warmed and he smiled just as warmly, "I will Ranboo. And I'll take care of everyone!"

"I bet you will," Ranboo chuckled and the taller male suddenly looked over his shoulder and flinched. George looked behind him and flinched in surprise as well when he noticed Schlatt just

suddenly standing there.

"Where's Tubbo?" Schlatt asked, staring at Ranboo.

Ranboo blinked at Schlatt before looking forcibly calm, "He went to Tommy's house."

Schlatt seemed to accept that and looked at the ground. Apparently, Ranboo had a heart of pure gold and couldn't handle the almost upset look Schlatt sported because he continued, "Tubbo told me he hopes you'll be okay and help the others!"

Schlatt perked up at that, studying Ranboo's face. George wasn't sure if Tubbo actually said that or if Ranboo just said it to try and lift Schlatt's mood, either way it worked. Schlatt gave a tiny smile, a nod, and walked away from the pair.

"Did you make that up?" George couldn't help but ask once the other was out of earshot. Ranboo looked down at George and smiled sheepishly.

"Yes, but I'm sure Tubbo feels that way," Ranboo said and his face fell a little, "He's been distracted....same as Tommy. They've both been acting weird."

"I'm sure they must be worried," George frowned but didn't say anything further when he noticed Dream and Sapnap walking up to them with three horses.

Ranboo relayed the same hopeful wishes of wellbeing to Sapnap and Dream, getting a couple of hugs in return much to the Ranboo's surprise before he left. George readied his horse and, after another half hour went by, everyone was mounted and ready to go.

Techno led the way just like before, giving George brief deja vu of the time they rode towards Techno's village. They rode out of the village with Eret, Phil, and Bad waving them off.

As they did, a nervous sort of feeling began to form in George's stomach and he wasn't entirely sure why.

Four hours into traveling made George remember why he didn't like riding a horse for so long. They stopped for a moment to take a small break and water the horses. Sapnap, Purpled, and Skeppy immediately began snacking. George leapt off his horse and led it away alongside Dream and his own horse to a nearby stream to let them drink.

"My body hurts," George complained with a sigh. Dream chuckled at him.

"I'm not used to riding horses either. I always went everywhere by foot," Dream told him and George sobered thinking about Dream walking everywhere during all his years traveling.

"Why didn't you ride horses then?" George asked softly. Dream hummed thoughtfully and glanced at George, his hands briefly tightening on the reins.

"Mostly because I saved my emeralds for other essentials I needed more. I couldn't often trade anyway because villagers don't like me," Dream explained with a light tone to his voice. George winced at the memory of how villagers tended to react to Dream, "Plus I didn't really feel like trying to tame a wild horse so...it was just easier for me to walk. Gave me good exercise."

"I see..." George trailed off, his attention stolen by Techno walking past them with a map in his hands. There was also a black pen, "You already mapped a route to the pillager's main base?"

"Yes," Techno answered him without even looking at him, studying the map intently, "If Schlatt's information is true, this should be the fastest way."

"It's *true*," Schlatt muttered from some distance away from them.

A thump from one of the carriages made George, Dream, and Techno look that way. There were only two wooden carriages, but they were only used to carry vast amounts of supplies needed for a long trip with so many people. Techno rose an eyebrow, "What was that?"

"I think something just fell in there," A warrior answered him but paused when there was a softer thump.

Techno's face suddenly blanched and his eyes widened a tad. Then it was like something clicked for him and he practically stomped his way to the first carriage. Wilbur looked at him with concern and confusion, "Tech?"

Techno went to the doors at the back of the carriage and flung them open with the ferocity of a boar and then growled. George gasped at the two half-concealed blonde boys hiding in the back, "*Tommy!*"

"Uh....uh....h-hey Techno," Tommy stammered, the fear of God in those blue eyes of his. Tubbo looked even worse. George saw Dream stand abruptly and everyone else were murmuring to themselves in shock.

"*Tommy!*" Wilbur shouted, his face morphing to one of anger as Techno grabbed the blonde's arm and pulled him out of the carriage. Things tumbled out along with him as Tommy protested the movement, "You snuck out with us?!"

Tommy winced at the amount of anger in Wilbur's tone. George's eyes widened at it himself, "Well, yeah I-"

"Tommy, how could you?!" Techno demanded, his teeth showing in a snarl, "Phil is probably panicking by now!"

Tommy grimaced as Tubbo climbed out of the carriage with a guilty look on his face. Schlatt immediately glared at the small blonde, "Tubbo, you too! What were you thinking?! You're recovering from a head injury!"

"It wasn't *that* bad," Tubbo muttered, scratching the dirt with his foot. Techno's eyes flared and Wilbur seethed more.

"It's still an injury Tubbo," Dream remarked and George blinked at his boyfriend's sudden input, "There's a reason we didn't want you two to come you know."

"Cause we're *kids*?" Tommy spat, his eyes suddenly darkening with anger. Dream leaned back, surprised by his anger.

"Basically," Purpled retorted, crossing his arms while Puffy watched the two boys worriedly.

"We didn't want to be left behind just because of our *age*!" Tubbo argued, looking away from Schlatt to glare at Purpled. Tommy nodded along to his words, "We can be useful too!"

Techno sighed, rubbing his face once, "I didn't want you two involved with this."

"Why?" Tommy challenged, still looking confused, angry, but also a bit hurt. Techno must have noticed because he said nothing.

"We don't want the pillagers to hurt you, Tommy," Wilbur answered in a softer tone than before. He also looked resigned to the fact they were there now.

"We can take care of ourselves," Tubbo mumbled and Tommy looked over at the small blonde appreciatively. George could understand where they were coming from. He also didn't want to be left behind but he also didn't want the boys to get hurt either. However, he's heard of their talent in fighting.

"I know you can defend yourself, but you shouldn't *have* to be doing that," Schlatt muttered, a dark look to his face. Tubbo flinched, his eyes going wide, "You don't want to be treated as a kid and I respect that, but you *are* a kid Tubbo. You shouldn't have to be fighting this fight."

Tubbo stared at Schlatt before his shoulders slumped, "I just want to help you guys get justice for what they've done to everyone."

Dream walked up to the small blonde and smiled, much to George and Sapnap's surprise, and ruffled his hair, "And you will, but you'll listen to us won't you? You understand why we're worried right?"

Tommy and Tubbo both stared at Dream for a moment before Tubbo nodded, smiling back at Dream, "We'll listen, right Tommy?"

"If we listen do we get to stay and fight?" Tommy asked seriously, looking from Dream to his brothers. Wilbur's eyes dimmed and he looked at Techno, who sighed heavily.

"Fine. You're already here anyways," Techno relented and both blondes cheered like they were just given an enormous amount of emeralds. Sapnap and Puffy chuckled, "We have an thirty minutes here then we'll move on again."

"I'll share my horse with Tommy," Wilbur claimed and smiled at the excited blonde, "That way we can take turns holding the reigns so I don't go crazy and blister my hands."

"What about me?" Tubbo asked slowly. Schlatt immediately turned his head which was sort of amusing but Dream beat him to it.

"You'll ride with me," Dream declared and Tubbo blinked at him. George couldn't help but snicker to himself when Schlatt glared at Dream for a moment.

"Okay!" Tubbo exclaimed, grinning at Dream, "Thanks!"

Dream nodded, ignoring Schlatt's stare to turn and wink at George, who shook his head with a tolerant smile. George wasn't sure if that meant he did that to rile Schlatt up because Dream was still mad at Schlatt or if he just wanted to spend time with Tubbo.

"Dream's *such* an asshole," Sapnap laughed quietly and George glanced at him, "He holds a grudge for years I'm telling you."

Well that certainly answered George's thoughts. George laughed along with an amused Sapnap. Techno cleared his throat, "Let's finish up here then. I have to message Phil."

George laughed even louder at the look on Tommy's face at that.

It's a few hours later when the group received another surprise. It was late afternoon so they were keeping a look out for somewhere suitable to set up camp for the night. It was then that Skeppy spotted something in the sky behind them. When Techno looked behind them to see, he nearly fell off his horse in shock. Tommy and Wilbur both gasped in unison.

George was stunned when everyone slowed and it turned out the figure was Phil, using his homemade elytra to glide down to them. George thought that Techno, Wilbur, and Schlatt had been angry, but that didn't compare to the rage on Phil's face as his gaze pinned on Tommy when he landed.

His blue eyes were flashing like lightening, his teeth clenched together and his hands in fists so tight his knuckles were white. George found himself frozen, wondering what was about to happen. Even Dream and Schlatt seemed stunned. Phil took a few steps towards his children and Tommy scrambled to get off the horse alongside Wilbur.

"P-Phil! Uh..." Tommy stammered, clearly uncomfortable. Phil's eyes narrowed and George noticed that even Techno looked uncomfortable while Wilbur was near sweating. Good God....

"Tommy, you little shit," Phil ground out between his clenched teeth, "Do you know how *panicked* I've been about you?! How long I've been running around looking for you thinking that you were kidnapped by those damn pyschos?! How close I was to *losing* myself when I noticed Tubbo wasn't around either?!"

Tommy and Tubbo paled drastically, their faces losing all color. George figured they didn't even think about how much Phil would panic at their disappearance nor how he would take it. Wilbur and Techno's eyes widened as Phil continued, "If it weren't for Techno messaging me that you snuck out with them I probably would have *killed* someone trying to find you!"

"I-I'm....." Tommy's face still looked absolutely white.

"I'm *very* disappointed in you," Phil said angrily as he crossed his arms. Wilbur winced in a type of brotherly sympathy when Tommy flinched. Skeppy and Puffy looked uncomfortable. Sapnap and Purpled still seemed stunned as they hadn't seen this side of Phil, "You snuck out to join your brothers despite knowing it was wrong to do so, good intentions aside."

"I-I'm sorry, Phil," Tommy swallowed heavily as he looked at the ground, unable to look at his father, "I didn't mean for you....I-I just wanted to fight too...."

Techno frowned, staring at Tommy while Wilbur looked like he wanted to reach out to the distraught blonde. Tubbo grimaced when Schlatt looked over at him again. Phil sighed, something upset in his eyes, "I wish you'd understand that me and your brothers care about you. We don't want to see you risking yourself like this. We just don't want you to get hurt. It has *nothing* to do with you being incapable or anything like that."

Tommy looked at him with wide eyes, startled, while some of the others shuffled awkwardly. Techno was one of them. Phil looked away from Tommy to Techno and Wilbur, "I've told Eret what happened before I left. I have no reason to go back so I'm staying with you all, mate."

"That's fine..." Techno replied, slowly nodding and Phil nodded back, walking away. Everyone let out a breath but Tubbo tensed when Phil threw a disappointed look his way before continuing to walk away.

George glanced at Dream to see him frowning, watching both boys with sympathy. He urged his horse closer to Dream and whispered to him, "You okay?"

"I just feel bad for both because I understand both of their reasoning," Dream whispered back, something serious in eyes, "Honestly, I would have done the same as Tommy and Tubbo if I were their age or even regardless."

George wasn't surprised, but he didn't think he would, himself, unless he knew Dream and Sapnap then. It was selfish, but he was really only there for them. Of course, he was glad that he could help the others too, but he wasn't going to lie to himself. George just didn't want anything to happen to Sapnap or Dream.

Maybe it was the same for Tommy and Tubbo, just towards different people. Or maybe they just wanted to fight. Who knows?

Later, right before Techno got Phil settled with someone else's horse and called for everyone to get ready to ride, George noticed Dream sneak towards Tommy and speak with him. George watched with a warm heart as Dream placed a gloved hand on top of Tommy's head and smiled to him. Whatever he said seemed comforting to Tommy because he brightened considerably. Tubbo did as well. Tubbo hugged Dream's side and Tommy laughed, pushing his arm off his head and playfully punching his shoulder.

It made George's heart ache with how good Dream really was that he couldn't help but cheer up the two boys, even if their parents were in the right to be stern about their safety.

When they stopped for the final time that evening, the sky was darkening and a few of the others went to get firewood. Anyone else started unpacking tents and putting them up. George gathered dry leaves to help with the fire, briefly marveling at Dream's jacked arms as he wound their tent up for the night.

Tubbo and Tommy silently carried rocks to surround the pit that'd make up the fire. Both avoided their respective parents' gazes. Tommy had a hard enough time even looking at Techno, though it seemed easier for Tommy to be around Wilbur.

"You doing alright?" George asked Tubbo quietly when the younger blonde got close enough to be heard. Tubbo blinked over at him as he grabbed a couple of blocks.

"Yeah...." Tubbo answered softly, "I didn't expect them to get this mad..."

"You should have honestly," George said seriously, but he smiled as he said it and Tubbo sighed, nodding his head.

"Phil's *never* gotten that mad before," Tubbo whispered, his shoulders slumping, "I feel bad for Tommy....it was my idea at first to come."

George frowned at him, "I understand *why* you want to come, don't worry. But they're your family, right? They care about you which is why they're so upset with you."

"I know," Tubbo replied but his eyes dimmed, "I guess I didn't think Phil would get *that* mad because he let us go on the mission alone together to the nether."

George considered that and smiled a little, "Well you guys were prepared for that and Phil was too. This time you just left without even telling him soon after you'd been attacked. Same as him. Of course he'd jump to the worst."

Tubbo's nodded, his eyes almost shining. George's heart plummeted, "I feel so bad now...."

"It'll be alright, Tubbo," George crooned, reaching to put a hand on Tubbo's forearm, "Later you can just apologize to Phil for worrying him."

Tubbo seemed to brighten just a little bit at that, "That's true. I guess I should say sorry to Schlatt too. He isn't happy with me and I didnt think he'd get mad either."

"If you want," George nodded in agreement, though he couldn't help but not care about Schlatt. Guess Dream wasn't the only one still mad with him.

George helped Tubbo find some more decent rocks and they both went back to the pit, where Skeppy was fixing stick and log placements before he started trying to start a fire.

"*Holy fuck!!*" Sapnap screeched and there was the sound of logs dropping onto the ground. George whirled around, his heart jumping in his chest when he saw Sapnap half on the ground. In the darkness of the woods in front Sapnap were a pairing of glowing eyes that seemed to get closer every second.

Dream immediately drew his diamond axe and got in a defensive position in front of Sapnap. Puffy, Purpled, Phil, and Techno all drew their swords almost simultaneously. Tommy, Skeppy, and Wilbur scrambled to do the same from their positions.

However, as soon as George realized the eyes were green and red with flicks of purple he gasped. It seemed everyone else had the same realization. Techno rose an eyebrow uncertainly as the figure continued to stalk closer, not completely visible yet except for his eyes, "Ranboo?"

George jumped two feet in the air when Tubbo suddenly flung himself to the nearest tree on the left and began climbing. Ranboo finally got close enough to be recognized and many of the others sighed in relief or looked on in confusion, dropping their hostile stances.

Ranboo didn't even greet any of them, George noticed, because Ranboo's eyes flicked over to where Tubbo jumped away and he snarled, actually *snarled*, "Tubbo! Don't you *dare* run away!"

Tommy was inching over towards Wilbur to hide himself and George was left wondering what in the hell was happening. Tubbo laughed nervously, pulling himself up another branch, "U-Uh, hey big guy!"

"Don't just *hey* me!" Ranboo snapped, glaring up at Tubbo, "Not after you just disappear like that!"

"I-I left a note for you!" Tubbo protested weakly. Phil crossed his arms.

"But not for me?" Phil ground out and Tubbo flinched. Ranboo's eyes flicked to Phil then to Tommy before settling on Tubbo again.

"I watched Phil panicking about Tommy and realized you weren't there either! How could you just *leave*?" Ranboo growled out, "You're hurt!"

"Not *anymore*!" Tubbo grumbled, tilting the hurt side of his head away from view. It was a vain effort, "It's just a bad bruise! I don't even have headaches anymore!"

"But it could get worse," Schlatt supplied unhelpfully and Tubbo glared over his way.

"I was wondering why you both were so weird lately," Ranboo sighed, his shoulders slumping as he reached just under the tree where Tubbo was, "You were planning to sneak out but didn't tell *me*?"

"I knew you'd get upset and try to stop us or maybe tell Phil on us," Tubbo ranted quickly, "And I know you don't like conflict so I knew you wouldn't want to go so..."

"But you just *left*," Ranboo began, his eyes starting to get misty. George's eyes widened and Puffy looked at the hybrid with worry, "Without telling me anything. You said you wouldn't....you wouldn't do that to me."

Tubbo's eyes widened and he stammered, "I didn't think you'd get that upset, Ranboo....I'm sorry. Don't.....don't get too upset, boss man. I'll tell you next time okay?"

"There'll be no *next* time," Schlatt clarified and Wilbur snorted, rolling his eyes. Dream shared a glance with George and Sapnap.

Ranboo ignored Schlatt altogether, "You said we were best friends, that you were my person to trust, you can't just *leave*."

Tubbo seemed absolutely devastated at how upset Ranboo was. Tommy just seemed stunned, like he didn't think it'd be a big deal to the Endermen-hybrid. Tubbo quickly lowered himself enough before jumping down the tree in front of Ranboo.

"Sorry, I won't do it again. I promise," Tubbo assured hesitantly and Ranboo just nodded, swallowing thickly.

"Are we all done now?" Techno monotoned and everyone looked at him, "The dramatics are over?"

Phil huffed, slightly amused, "There were good reasons for the dramatics but there should be no more."

"Right," Purpled snorted, crossing his arms. Skeppy immediately began working on the fire again while Tommy leaned away from Wilbur when Wilbur began teasing him for hiding behind him in the first place.

"Hey at least I didn't jump up a *tree*!" Tommy defended himself and Sapnap burst out laughing. Dream and Puffy chuckled.

Tubbo blushed, "Well *you've* never seen Ranboo when he's angry! Or, not until now but that's still a *tame* version!"

Ranboo grimaced, looking away. Dream stopped chuckling and George looked over at him in worry. Dream had described what happened when the pillagers came for Ranboo and how Ranboo attacked him when Tubbo was hurt. Dream admitted to him how he doesn't get scared often but Ranboo's 'ender state' had frightened him. It still seemed to frighten Ranboo himself more than anyone if his reactions were anything to go by. George felt terrible for him.

"This is going to be a problem," Schlatt announced suddenly, studying Tubbo and Ranboo. Tubbo blinked over at him.

"What's the problem?" Puffy asked him tensely, narrowing her eyes at him.

"Well the hybrid's *here* now," Schlatt replied and Tubbo immediately muttered '*his name's Ranboo*', "And he's one of the pillager's main goal."

Immediately everyone froze and Techno groaned, "Well he's here now. Nothing we can do. If anything Ranboo will be useful in helping us."

"I-I will," Ranboo nodded, surprising Techno. Ranboo looked bashful, shuffling around. He briefly met George and Dream's gaze and then looked a tad more confident, "I-I'll try my best to help and be useful."

"You *are* useful, boss man," Tubbo commented, grabbing his hand and tugging on it. Ranboo looked at him, "So don't talk like you aren't. I don't like that."

"Uh, s-sorry," Ranboo murmured hesitantly and Tommy huffed in amusement.

"I bet I'll kill more pillagers than you, Ranboob," Tommy grinned and Ranboo looked over at him, unamused. George resisted the urge to laugh at the nickname.

"I'll not be killing *anyone* if I can help it Tommy," Ranboo sighed tiredly.

"And there's no contest about it," Phil spoke up, making Tommy shrink back and stay silent, "Killing isn't a game nor is it supposed to be fun."

"It was a joke, sorry," Tommy muttered, casting his eyes away and Phil's gaze softened, yet he didn't say anything.

"The fire's done!" Skeppy suddenly exclaimed and George was thankful for the distraction.

Everyone broke off to finish their tasks and eventually gathered around the campfire to start eating dinner. The conversations were still a little tense or awkward, but George took his mind off it by grabbing Dream's gloved hand.

Dream smiled down at him, "What? You okay?"

"Yeah..." George trailed off, smiling back before comparing their hand sizes, "It's just been a lot today. Your hands are huge by the way."

"Hmmm, yeah it has been," Dream hummed before grinning mischievously, "That's not the only thing huge about me."

George's face burned and he smacked Dream's shoulder a little more roughly than he meant to. Dream wheezed, earning some of the others' attention.

"You're *actually* crazy Dream!" George scowled, hitting him in the arm again. Dream didn't even flinch. Dream did, however, wind an arm around George's stomach and pull him into his lap with little effort, "Hey! Let go!"

"Don't think so. I haven't charged up yet," Dream smirked and Sapnap laughed loudly.

"Charged up? What are you even talking about?" George deadpanned, but yelped into laughter when Dream's fingers started tickling him, "N-No-oooo, stop, Dream s-stop!!!"

"This is deffo flirtin'," Tubbo remarked as he looked up at Ranboo, who just nodded wordlessly. Tommy laughed alongside Wilbur and Skeppy at that. Puffy just grinned and Purpled shook his head like a disappointed dad.

Techno looked almost in physical pain just from watching the pair, which made Phil and surprisingly Schlatt, laugh.

Not *one* of them even tried to help George or speak up. So now Dream was still tick-torturing him. Traitors.

Chapter End Notes

Tickle-torture...I legit can't handle it for real. I kick and squeal. 😊 So yeah, there were a lot of drama between some of the characters but I honestly don't know what Tommy and Tubbo expected. Ranboo actually getting mad was a treat to write. I imagine would be if his friends just disappeared.

As always, I appreciate any comments you guys leave as well as any criticism. I do like two checks before I post yet I still manage to miss things so forgive me! Hope you have a good rest of your month! 😊😊

Chapter 30

Chapter Summary

Techno goes over the details of the plan and they all make decisions over their part to play. Dream has an idea to quell some of his, Phil's, and Schlatt's worries.

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Hope you've had a good couple of weeks! I also hope you enjoy the fluff in this chapter because the fighting is gonna start soon and well....that always leads to angst!

Also, a commenter revealed to me that Purpled was also a kid which SOMEHOW I'd confused Purpled with Punz in terms of age. I thought Purpled was around 24 and I don't know how I got that confused! Purpled is 17 so I rectified that in this chapter! So sorry about that! 🙄

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

That night, George had just smoothed out some blankets he'd packed for the trip when Dream plopped himself down, nearly ruining George's work. George opened his mouth to spew curses at Dream until Dream tugged him down to lay beside him.

"I wasn't ready yet!" George complained as Dream wheezed and wrapped an arm around his waist, pulling George flush against him. His chest was to George's back, "At least let me get the blanket to go over us."

"I got it," Dream hummed, turning without letting go of George and pulling the blanket from the other side. It took some time since he was doing it one-handed, but he eventually pulled the thin blanket over them while George stared at him.

George sighed slowly and allowed himself to relax as Dream snuggled against him. He felt so bone tired from the day's riding and the emotional rollercoaster he'd witnessed before. He shuffled a little to get comfortable, amused when Dream tightened his arm, "I'm not going anywhere."

"I know," Dream whispered in a strange tone. George rose an eyebrow and tried to turn his head to face his boyfriend but froze when Dream leaned down to kiss his nape.

"Dream?" George asked quietly, trying not to shiver from the feeling of Dream's warm lips.

With his lips still on George's neck, Dream's other arm came around and his fingers dipped under George's shirt, riding it up. George's breath hitched and his eyes widened. He could feel Dream moving his lips to suck a mark into his shoulder blade while his fingers lightly moved up to his stomach.

"D-Dream, we can't do anything here," George stammered, struggling to remain as quiet as possible as his heart thumped wildly in his chest. His body betrayed him by melting into Dream's touch when his fingers rubbed little circles into George's stomach, "T-The others might hear-"

"Then you should try to keep quiet," Dream murmured lowly, the teasing evident in his tone. George frowned, unamused, though he couldn't help but feel a little turned on. However, the thought about anyone hearing him making those kind of noises was mortifying.

"No Dream," George scowled, leaning forward to escape Dream's lips. It went silent for a few awkward moments and George feared he might have been a little harsh about it.

"Okay..." Dream whispered, disappointment coloring his tone. George huffed, a little amused, and he turned over slowly in Dream's arms to see Dream looked mostly disappointed but also embarrassed to be rejected.

"I *want* to..." George said quietly, shifting one of his arms to lift it to Dream's unmasked face. He used his fingers to lightly trail them across Dream's face like he was mapping it, "Just not when there are others close by."

Dream smiled, looking a bit better as his eyes crinkled into the smile, "Love you."

George's heart swelled in his chest and he grinned, "Love you too idiot."

The next morning Techno called everyone's attention after they'd settled to eat some breakfast. George allowed himself to be pulled into sitting on Dream's lap. He was getting entirely too used to Dream's clinginess. Sapnap shot them an eyebrow wiggle that made Dream chuckle.

The mood turned serious when Techno began speaking though, "We need to go over some things regarding the mission."

To George's amusement, Dream, Sapnap, Purpled, Schlatt, and even Puffy groaned as she said, "Again?"

"Yes," Techno huffed, narrowing his eyes, "There are now more people here than we planned."

George's eyes drifted to Tommy and Tubbo, who were sitting side by side with Ranboo sitting on Tubbo's other side. Both blondes made no face at the words but Ranboo winced with a bit of guilt

on his two-toned face.

"We planned on spying and observing the base for the first day or two," Techno explained as he looked over them all, "I want to be sure of what we're getting into before we go for it."

"Like we did at their base in the nether," Tommy piped up with a grin and he seemed to be doing a lot better than yesterday. Techno nodded.

"We also want to watch to see how they deal with things like security," Wilbur added seriously, "If they do at all."

"They probably will," Dream scowled, "Since they apparently know someone's supposed to come."

"Damn spies," Skeppy muttered under his breath and George was right there with him. He hated that they'd had a pillager right under their noses and hadn't known about it.

"We should also map out the outside a little," Sapnap was saying when George tuned back into the conversation, "At the very least see how many exits there are."

Techno nodded and Puffy beamed at Sapnap proudly, who blushed from the sudden look. George chuckled. Ranboo decided to speak up hesitantly, "Um, where should we be during this plan?"

Phil looked over at them with a furrowed brow, "I don't want any of you to go off on your own."

"Wouldn't dream of it," Tommy said with an obvious grin towards Dream who groaned at the pun. Tubbo laughed brightly and even Ranboo cracked a smile.

"Right," Wilbur snorted, giving an amused glance towards Tommy.

"After you observe, how will you start the attack?" Schlatt suddenly wondered out loud, a thoughtful dazed look on his face like he were trying to picture it in his head.

Techno glanced at him with a frown but replied anyways, "A lot of it is assumed until we get there and see what we're actually dealing with. Provided this isn't your trap."

"It's *not*," Schlatt sighed, his face pinched with annoyance.

"If there is more than one entrance we could split up or Wilbur could place an explosive at one end for a diversion so that we aren't just bombarded by their entire forces," Skeppy butt in and George looked at him in surprise alongside many others. That was actually a good idea.

"I like that," Phil nodded, "I don't know about splitting up though since we don't know exactly how many there could be."

"Almost a hundred I believe," Schlatt replied immediately and everyone stared at him, stunned. George's heart fell into his stomach. Almost a hundred? They barely even had thirty including the warriors they brought with them.

"That's....a lot," Sapnap muttered, his eyes still wide. Techno snorted.

"I'm not too worried about numbers," He claimed while George and Purpled looked at him incredulously, "Dream and I make up about 15 warriors by ourselves. Maybe more."

Dream suddenly burst out laughing, "True, true!"

"Big ego much?" Wilbur commented but his eyes were light with continuous amusement. Phil, Tommy, and Tubbo were all laughing.

"*Still*...we probably shouldn't split up too much," Phil smiled and his eyes flicked to the younger members of the group, "Just to be safe."

"And what if there are prisoners?" Purpled asked quietly and George noticed Tubbo and Sapnap tense briefly, "Do some of us try and scout to see if there are any when the *fighting* starts?"

"We'll see how it goes when we get there," Techno said slowly, frowning, "But we won't leave them behind if there are any."

"Hopefully not," Sapnap scowled and George noticed the way Dream shifted ever so slightly closer to Sapnap while also pulling George closer on his lap. He smiled.

"And Ranboo," Techno started, making the Endermen-hybrid jolt at suddenly being included, "Stay with a big group okay?"

"Sure," Ranboo nodded easily and George watched as Dream frowned over at him.

"Why do they think you could get ender pearls differently than us, Ranboo?" He asked slowly and Ranboo blinked over at Dream. George suddenly recalled what Dream had told him about the attack in front of the village, how the pillagers wanted Ranboo for his abilities.

"Um, I'm not really sure," Ranboo answered, his brow furrowing in confusion, "They must be confused."

"*Can* you get them differently than us?" Puffy asked, raising an eyebrow.

Ranboo shook his head, "No. Ender pearls are kinda like...the essence of an Endermen. They can't just hand it over to me like the pillagers seemed to think."

"They probably just think that because they think you can talk to them," George spoke up softly and Ranboo shrugged, looking hesitant.

"I *can* talk to them.....sometimes. Not all of them talk back to me," He confessed and Tubbo gasped, leaning towards him intently. Many of the others looked just as surprised.

"Really?! That's so *cool*!" Tubbo beamed and Ranboo blushed, fidgeting a little bit at the attention.

"Interesting," Phil hummed, "They want ender pearls so bad, so it makes sense they want you."

"They just want Ranboo to do the dirty work for them," Techno spat in disgust and Sapnap nodded, just as disgusted, "Since it'll be safer for them if he goes out and gets them from the Endermen."

"Yeah since they don't straight out attack him," Skeppy added, his eyes widening in understanding.

Ranboo looked uncomfortable so George decided to open his mouth to change the topic but Dream beat him to it, "Don't worry, we'll deal with it and soon we won't have to worry about those damn pillagers anymore."

Everyone looked at Dream in surprise and Techno snorted in amusement, "Yeah, very true."

"*Anyways*," Wilbur drawled, "I plan on blowing the place up sky high after it's over but I need to make sure everyone's out before then."

"Right. Who all has communicators again?" Phil questioned, turning to look at Techno.

"Me, Sapnap, Puffy, Techno, and Purpled," Dream answered, holding up the small device. George blinked, intrigued yet again by the design. Sam was a genius, "Back at home Eret has one too."

"How about I give mine to Wilbur?" Puffy smiled and Wilbur looked at her in surprise, "That way the rest of you can message him when it's all clear to blow the place up?"

"If you're okay with that," Techno nodded and Puffy grinned, throwing her device towards Wilbur, who caught it with a huge grin.

"Awesome! Thanks!" Wilbur exclaimed as he chuckled, "I'll be planting the TNT both inside and outside during the fight so don't rely on me too much when it starts."

"I wouldn't rely on you anyways," Tommy teased and Wilbur glared over at him.

"Well that should be just about everything for now-" Techno started but was interrupted by Tubbo.

"Uh, wait, about the possibility of there being prisoners..." Tubbo trailed off and George frowned over at him, "How about once the fight starts, me, Tommy, and Ranboo go scout out the interior to make sure there aren't any?"

"*What?*" Schlatt scowled, his tone darkening, "That's a stupid idea."

Tubbo and Tommy glared over at him but Sapnap cleared his throat, "No offense to you three but you shouldn't go off by yourselves."

"Tubbo and I are the best at mapping out a place! That's what we did in the nether," Tommy protested and George saw Dream look over at Techno.

"Someone *should* make sure there are no prisoners..." Phil frowned, not looking happy, "But it can't be just you three by yourselves."

"You actually want them to do it?" Skeppy asked incredulously.

Phil shrugged, a serious look to his eyes as he looked over at the youngest males, "They are good at sneaking around."

Tommy chuckled nervously at that but Tubbo beamed, "Yeah!"

"Not by yourselves," Techno grumbled, crossing his arms. George understood the worry for the three boys. The situation was unpredictable, so there was no telling what would happen once they actually got inside.

If he went with them, maybe George could keep them from getting hurt. George stared at the trio and smiled, "I'll go with them then."

All three boys looked stunned and George heard Dream make some kind of strange noise. Phil opened his mouth to say something but Purpled spoke up, "I guess I will as well!"

"That is better," Wilbur nodded in agreement, looking a bit more relieved.

"Uh, George..." Dream frowned and George felt himself begin to sweat when Dream's arm tightened around him, "Are you sure about that?"

"Yeah, I'd be more helpful *that* way then during an all-out brawl," George explained and understanding went through Dream's eyes. He sighed, nodding his head. George smiled, happy that he wasn't going to fight him on this.

"If you're sure," Sapnap shrugged, looking only slightly worried about the idea, "The rest of us can hold down any main forces then."

"Is that okay with you Phil?" Techno asked, turning to the older male. Phil looked at him then stared at the trio sitting there nervously.

"Yes, that's fine," Phil sighed out while Tubbo and Tommy whooped for glee. Ranboo smiled anxiously, fidgeting with his coat in response. Schlatt just narrowed his eyes over at the trio thoughtfully.

"We'll save any further discussion for later. We need to get moving again," Techno claimed and the others immediately began to stand.

George walked with Dream to finish packing up their stuff before they mounted their horses. Tubbo quickly joined Dream and George noticed how dazed Dream seemed. He was being all quiet and expressionless like whenever he's deep in thought.

Was he still worried about George or was he worried about something else? George thought it was pretty good idea. He wasn't as good at fighting as the others, but he *was* good enough to defend himself and he had medical knowledge. If he went with the kids then he could make sure they don't do something stupid or get hurt.

George inwardly sighed. Once Dream worried about something he wouldn't stop for awhile. He'd have to wait until later to talk with him.

They were riding for almost forty minutes before Dream suddenly decided to ride alongside George. He blinked over at his boyfriend curiously as Dream turned his head over at him without fully taking his eyes off the path in front of him.

"I think I should teach you some more self defense moves," He professed and George blinked at the randomness of his words. Tubbo, who was riding on the same horse as Dream, just stared wordlessly.

"Huh?" George replied stupidly before his words even fully registered. His eyes widened, "Oh...but like...how?"

"The next time we go to rest we'll practice for, like, thirty minutes or something," Dream frowned, his lips tightening in a way that George recognized as him being worried, "I'm sure Technoblade won't mind."

"He won't!" Tubbo beamed and George rose an eyebrow at him. Tubbo grinned eagerly, "Will you let me in on the lessons?"

"Sure," Dream huffed, amused. He turned back to the front, "I'd just feel better if I taught you a couple of things since you want to go off on your own."

"Not on my own," George rolled his eyes and when Dream shrugged, his shoulders looked too tight. George stared at him. He really didn't like the idea of him going off with Purpled and the others but George still thought it made the most sense.

"I think it could be fun! Tommy and Ranboo might want to join!" Tubbo said happily and Dream snorted, like he didn't think that to be true.

"As long as you don't play around it should be fine," Dream retorted and Tubbo just laughed. George inwardly sighed.

If that's what it took for him to feel better about the whole thing, then who was George to refuse? "Fine, I'll do it."

Dream grinned in a similar way to Tubbo, which was pretty funny, and George just shook his head, biting back a smile of his own.

After that Dream focused more on the road, especially when he almost steered right into a tree. George had to smother laughter with one hand at that because seeing Dream flounder anxiously was hilarious and somewhere else George heard Sapnap laughing as well.

Despite the fact that riding for long periods of time wasn't comfortable and George was pretty sure he was getting a rash somewhere on his thigh, he enjoyed being able to look around at his surroundings. They passed in a bit of a blur since they were riding, but not so much where George couldn't focus on the surrounding nature.

This was usually what got him through the long ride. This time though he was so lost in his thoughts and daydreams that he was genuinely surprised when Technoblade called for a lunch break. Only then did George notice the sun higher in the sky. George slowed his horse to a stop and hopped off with his legs aching.

"Wilbur takes too many risks while he's riding a horse," Tommy complained as everyone began to get off and tie up their horses. Wilbur just laughed, "I don't wanna ride with him anymore!"

"Consider it a punishment then," Phil grinned and Tommy groaned, frowning. Ranboo actually snickered which was funny enough on its own but Tommy glared over at him threateningly, throwing a small pebble at him. Ranboo gasped and dodged it.

"Alright *children*," Purpled sighed, lifting a hand, "Can we just gather some firewood please?"

"You're literally around the same age as us," Tubbo scowled, making a face at him. Purpled wrinkled his nose at him in response.

George blinked rapidly at the information as Techno went "*Heh?!*"

Puffy and Phil sent Techno an odd look as she said incredulously, "Did you not know that?"

"I...." Techno looked positively stunned and Purpled laughed at the look on his face.

"I know, I know, I don't look my age," Purpled bragged, making a face as Tubbo and Tommy glared at him, "And I act more mature."

"Right...." Sapnap laughed, shaking his head in good humor. George was still reeling with the fact that Purpled was apparently a kid. Well, George had pegged him at like 19. He was actually around Tubbo's age?

"Huh, that explains some things," Dream claimed from over at George's other side. George jumped. When did he get there?!

"I still can't believe you didn't know that," Phil still looked incredulous as he looked at Techno, "I thought it was weird that you never referred to him as a kid like the others and gave him different tasks."

"I must have forgotten or something okay?" Techno said defensively and Wilbur laughed outright at that.

"You know what, I understand that," Skeppy nodded instantly while Puffy giggled and Techno rolled his eyes.

"No more special treatment for you," Tommy sneered without any real venom and Purpled looked over at him flatly.

"Whatever," Purpled shrugged, "I've been fighting since I was a toddler that's why I probably didn't seem like a kid."

Techno and Dream both made a face that looked similar since they both wore masks and George bit back a laugh, "Let's just get the firewood."

"Oh before that!" Dream exclaimed and Techno looked over at him, "I had an idea to teach George and the kids some self defense moves while we're taking breaks."

"Self defense?" Schlatt asked quietly and George almost jumped again. Schlatt wasn't very talkative during the mission so far other than when Tubbo first joined so it was almost easy for George to forget he was there.

"The most important one I can think of is a move that might give you a chance to get out of a chokehold or a hold in general," Dream explained, "It'd make me feel better if they at least knew of a way to get out should they get grabbed."

"I think that's a *great* idea," Phil nodded immediately while even Schlatt's eyes lit up in approval. Sapnap glanced over at George.

"Awesome, sounds cool!" Tommy smirked as he turned to Tubbo eagerly, "You're learning it too, right Tubs?"

"Right!" Tubbo beamed and turned to Ranboo, "You too!"

"Oh...uh....o-okay," Ranboo nodded, looking surprised that he were included. George felt a strange ache in his chest at that.

"Great! Let's get firewood first so they can start to cook lunch and then we'll find a place to practice," Dream ordered and both blonde boys nodded eagerly again, taking off into the woods while dragging Ranboo with them. Purpled sighed and followed them at a leisurely pace.

"I could help with the practice," Sapnap offered and Dream nodded over at him, "Great! George over there is rusty so he could use a good spar!"

"You've just been *waiting* to say something about me huh?" George responded flatly and Sapnap snickered, "As if Dream was going to allow me to pass on this."

"Aww he's learning," Dream cooed and then wheezed when George threw his bag at him. Skeppy laughed along with them from where he was squatting to make a place for the fire along with Puffy.

George ignored them and walked off to help Phil and Wilbur begin to set up a few blankets for everyone to sit on while they ate. Afterwards George helped get firewood and began aiding

Skeppy in stacking the firewood accordingly.

When Skeppy started the fire and Schlatt began cooking the first of the steaks, Dream grabbed George's wrist and tugged him along, "Alright! Practice time guys!"

"Yeah let's gooo!!" Tubbo cheered excitedly while Schlatt chuckled at him. He practically pulled Ranboo along with him by his hand while Tommy raced to join them from the other side of the camp.

George sighed, already feeling tired at the thought of practicing. Dream led them not too far away from the camp. There weren't really any small fields or clearings so Dream made do with a little circle of space in the trees.

"Where's Sapnap?" Dream asked, looking around. George rose an eyebrow but then jumped when Sapnap suddenly appeared by his left side.

"I was here the whole time dude, what the hell?" Sapnap laughed, having seen George's reaction. George glared at him.

"So how are we doing this?!" Tommy asked eagerly, shifting his weight on his feet. Tubbo was also just as eager, literally bouncing on the tips of his toes. Ranboo, however, looked about as eager to be there as George was.

"I'll start with the kids if you wanna start teaching George," Dream proposed as he grinned at Sapnap, who shrugged.

"You're gonna leave me with him?" George asked, horrified and both males laughed. George thought for sure that Dream would be the one teaching him.

"Oh don't worry George," Sapnap smirked and George sighed loudly. This was gonna suck.

"I don't care who teaches who! Can we just start?" Tubbo near whined, shuffling around like he couldn't sit still if his life depended on it. Honestly it reminded George of Dream.

"Yeah we don't have a lot of time to practice!" Tommy exclaimed and Dream rolled his eyes at them.

"I know I know," He drawled before turning back to Sapnap with a more serious expression, "Take it slow and just brush up on the basics of it okay?"

Sapnap nodded just as seriously much to George's relief. At least he wasn't gonna play around with

it, not *much* anyways. George allowed himself to relax a little as Dream walked off to the three boys while Sapnap stretched his arms.

"You okay with someone other than Dream holding on to you Gogy?" Sapnap teased with a wolfish grin and George glared at him flatly.

"You say that like you haven't hugged me before," He retorted and Sapnap laughed, his eyes crinkling. Despite himself, George couldn't help but smile at his friend's antics.

"Alright in all seriousness let me know if you're uncomfortable," Sapnap smiled and George nodded, "Then let's start with this..."

Sapnap walked up to him and after looking at him for approval one last time, he wrapped one arm loosely around George's throat and the other around his waist, "If someone's got an arm around your neck like this, you could do a couple of things first."

George was surprised how easy Sapnap's words were to follow. George was more of a visual learner than an audio one but Sapnap made it simple.

"You could stomp on their foot which may not make them let go of you completely but it'd be enough to surprise them so you could make your next move," Sapnap explained and George hummed thoughtfully, his brow furrowing in concentration.

He made George use his foot to pretend to stomp Sapnap's to follow along with his words, "Next you could elbow their stomach as hard as you can or, depending on the situation and how you're held, you could try to elbow their chest."

"Hmm, makes sense," George said slowly as he mimicked the words with his arms, "What if that doesn't work?"

"Again, depending on the hold and how off guard they are, you could get away enough to twist their arm like this," Sapnap guided his movements and George smiled, "Of course if you're desperate enough you could go for the low blow and knee them in the balls or even biting their arm is an option."

George laughed at the sudden imagery he had, "Of course."

A yelp caught his attention to see Tubbo had grabbed Dream's arm and used his weight to literally throw the taller on the ground with a manic grin, "I *did* it!"

"How the fuck?" Sapnap gasped out and George laughed louder this time. Did he just see that right? Did tiny Tubbo *throw* Dream over his shoulder?

Tommy and Ranboo looked floored. Ranboo's fingers twitched, "How...how did you *do* that?"

"I used as much strength as I could! Plus he was off guard so I also used his own weight against him," Tubbo beamed as he gestured wildly with his hands and Tommy shook his head.

"You frighten me sometimes Tubbo," Tommy claimed and this just made George giggle even more. Dream got up and dusted himself off.

"Okay so I underestimated you a little," He laughed out, "Don't expect everyone to do that or for that to work every time though..."

Tubbo sobered up and nodded seriously, "Yeah..."

"Tommy, you're next," Dream grinned and Tommy grinned as well, cracking his knuckles as he and Tubbo switched places. Ranboo shot a look to George that almost looked like a cry for help. George chuckled and sent him a sympathetic look.

"Alright, let's get back to it," Sapnap said somewhat distractedly as he sent Tubbo and Dream one last shocked look, "We'll have you practice what I just showed you so don't hold back."

"Sure," George nodded and got back into place hesitantly.

When Phil and Schlatt came to get them roughly thirty-five minutes later, George had yet to successfully pull off any move Sapnap showed him. He argued that Sapnap was being too serious about it but then shut up when Sapnap told him how the enemies wouldn't go easy on him either.

"What did you just say?" Schlatt asked, his eyes widening down at Tubbo.

"I managed to throw Dream over my shoulder! I also picked up Tommy at one point when we sparred!" Tubbo claimed and Ranboo nodded to attest to the truth to his words.

"What the *fuck* dude?" Phil laughed out when Tommy blushed and started arguing, pointing a finger at his best friend.

"Tubbo just surprised me that's all! I didn't think he could *actually* pick up me!"

"I keep telling you guys I could do it," Tubbo said as he rolled his eyes, "Ranboo is the only one that keeps believing me."

"That's because I've seen things," Ranboo said mysteriously and George wanted to laugh so hard

tears would bloom in his eyes, but he didn't because his arms still hurt a lot from sparring with Sapnap.

"I'm impressed," Schlatt grinned and went to rub his hand through Tubbo's hair. Tubbo tensed for the briefest second but allowed him to mess up his hair, "Good job Tubbo."

Tubbo's eyes widened before he beamed, "Thanks!"

"Tommy did a good job getting out of my holds as well," Dream spoke up and George hid a smile when Tommy looked pleasantly surprised, pride slowly rushing through his eyes, "Probably because he grew up with Techno as a brother."

Phil laughed, his eyes bright, "Probably, but I'm glad things went okay. Well done, mate!"

Tommy beamed as well, "Yeah!"

"Ranboo just needs to work on his intent more," Dream smiled over at the tall Endermen-hybrid, who ducked his head shyly, "If he were more aggressive with his moves he'd have no trouble at all."

"Ranboo couldn't hurt a bird if he tried," Tommy rolled his eyes and Dream shook his head, almost looking like he wanted to say something.

"I just don't want to hurt anyone if I don't have to..." Ranboo spoke up quietly. George felt his heart go out to him. Tubbo frowned.

"Let's hope you don't have to then!" Sapnap grinned over at the other and George withheld the urge to say something, "George wasn't half bad either, he learns pretty fast!"

George was genuinely surprised by the compliment and Dream snickered at him for it, "Wow....thanks Sapnap."

"Well if you've wrapped things up then let's go eat lunch," Schlatt said but he was mainly talking to Tubbo. He wrapped an arm around the small blonde's shoulders and led him away as Tubbo looked stunned but didn't fight the hold.

"Hey wait!" Tommy growled out, racing to follow them. Ranboo just silently followed as well like he magnetized to the two blondes.

George simply shook his head at their antics as everyone went to follow after them. He almost flinched when someone touched his hand but he relaxed when he saw Dream there. He wasn't sure

when Dream even walked over to him.

“You okay?” He questioned as he did an obvious once over of George’s body. George fought back a blush, remembering the previous night.

“Yeah, Sapnap hits like a girl,” He teased and he heard Sapnap’s squawk from ahead on them. Dream let out a loud startled wheezing laughter, unable to speak after that.

George just squeezed his hand with a smile and thanked whatever God was listening that he was surrounded by so many wonderful people. And he was going to protect as many of them as he could.

Chapter End Notes

George and Sapnap teasing is one of my favorite things! Well, any Dream-Team dynamic is one of my favorite things! As well as the ben
trio!! ♥ Anyways, hope you enjoyed the
chapter!

As usual, let me know if you have any questions or concerns and I'll reply to you! I also just look forward to anything you guys have to say! I love reading you're comments! Have a great day/week/month! I'll see you with a new chapter as soon as I can!

Chapter 31

Chapter Summary

Dream struggles with his overwhelming attraction for George. The group comes even closer to reaching the pillager's base.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I hope you've all been well. I've missed this so much but recently I moved when I got a new job! I'm finally starting to feel settled in so I wanted to post again! My job is full-time of course so I hope you'll continue to be patient with me! I'm still aiming for at least 2 updates a month from now on especially since this story is almost completed!

If you feel up to it, please let me know how you've been doing and how you've been feeling about the story! I'd love to hear from you all again!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream was pretty sure he was going crazy. Like actually one hundred percent insane. Here he was, on a mission so important it literally affected the lives of *everyone* he cared about as well as countless innocents, yet during their travels so far he can't keep his mind off George.

And a lot of what went through his mind was becoming increasingly more dirty. Who can help it with a boyfriend as pretty as George was? He seriously doesn't have to try and he looks sexy as hell doing the most innocent things! Like what the fuck?

They were all still a couple of days away from the pillager's base, if Schlatt's information is as correct as he says it is, and Dream used up any opportunity to spend time with George. Namely he wanted to continue training him and the kids, which admittedly helped keep his mind away from the unholy paths that kept springing up about George.

And then it was on the night after said training that Dream and George retired to their set up tent. Dream just finished putting out the blankets upon George's request and turned his head to tell his boyfriend when his mouth dropped open stupidly upon seeing George in the midst of rummaging for a new shirt, his previous dirtied one off his body, leaving his front bare.

They'd changed in front of each other once but Dream still felt blind-sided every time he saw any bare part of George's body. Dream gulped when George finally found a shirt and pulled it over his head, eyeing the way his arms and shoulders moved.

George turned and Dream jolted at being caught staring. George's eyes widened before he laughed, "Were you just watching me?"

"Yes, you're sexy as fuck you know?" Dream responded honestly, forcing himself to sound calm as he grinned toothily. George seemed surprised by his words and just laughed in that breathy way he did naturally.

"*What?*" He laughed out, shaking his head at Dream's antics. Dream stared at the way his neck muscle flexed as he laughed, "You're crazy sometimes."

"All the time," Dream amended, moving his eyes away from George's body to look him the eyes, still grinning. George rolled his cute brown eyes but said nothing.

They got situated on the makeshift pile of blankets and Dream immediately wrapped his arms around George to pull him in for cuddles like he always did. He nuzzled his face in George's soft brown hair as George huffed with effort, pulling a blanket over them.

Things got quiet after that and Dream hummed, not as tired as he knows he should feel. He really wished he could kiss and touch George, but he respected his boyfriend's boundaries. And to be fair, the idea of anyone hearing the lovely noises his boyfriend could make didn't sit right with him either.

'Again, not the thing to be focusing on during an important mission' Dream reminded himself sternly. He closed his eyes and allowed George's slow but steady breathing to lull him into his own slumber.

The next day was just as distracting as the others. Dream sighed tiredly, actually feeling frustrated with himself. He steered his horse around a fallen log and peeked over at George, who was the perfect picture of some kind of prince only without the fancy clothes.

"Dream?" Tubbo's voice drifted from behind him and Dream almost, *almost* jerked, his eyes blinking rapidly behind his mask as he was brought back to himself.

He wasn't about to run into anything this time so he glanced over his shoulder at Tubbo, who was holding onto him with a curious expression on his face, "You okay? You were clenching the reigns over and over."

"I'm good Tubbo," Dream reassured, not even realizing he was indeed clenching the reigns. Jesus, he needs to get a grip. He can't be that sexually frustrated, right...?

"Did you know there are about 4,000 different species of bees in our country?" Tubbo spat out randomly and Dream found himself stupefied by the sudden sentence.

"W-What?" Dream asked, both confused and shocked. Tubbo giggled at whatever he must have looked like.

"Yup! I read that in a book once!" He replied eagerly and Dream was just left wondering why he told him that, "And did you know that worker bees are all female?"

"Uh, no. Wait what's the difference?" Dream questioned, confused as hell by this information.

Tubbo kept answering him about these little facts about bees and Dream didn't notice until almost an hour into their little conversation swapping that Tubbo was distracting him. Probably to try and make him relax. He appreciated it immensely.

When they set up for camp later George came over to the two blondes with a smile on his face, "I saw some berry bushes back in the woods so I was gonna forage for some to go with lunch."

"Oh yay! Tommy and I really like those!" Tubbo grinned brightly, "I'll help you gather some!"

"I can help too..."

All three looked over to where Ranboo was just *there*, like he teleported or something and Tubbo was the only one that didn't look phased at all by his sudden appearance, "Awesome boss man! It'll take less time then!"

"Just don't get lost or go out too far," Dream chuckled after a moment passed, "We have to practice after."

"I know," George huffed and Dream laughed a little louder at the look on his face. He knew George wasn't fond of the practice. Ranboo wasn't either. It was important though and he appreciated them trying at all.

Everyone was already doing their own little odd jobs to set things up for the lunch break after they left and Dream helped some of the village warriors sharpen weapons since there wasn't much else for him to do that wasn't being covered by someone else.

Techno came up to him during that time, "Dream..."

"Yeah?" Dream blinked up at the other. He never really had any problems talking with Techno. In ways he felt like he truly understood the other and they were constantly compared to each other in terms of talent by other people.

"Today I think I'll help out with that practice sparring you've been doing," He claimed and Dream's eyes widened behind the mask.

"Okay sure. That'll help a lot," Dream replied nonchalantly and bit back a frown when he noticed something off about Techno's demeanor, "Everything alright though?"

Techno seemed startled at that question, "Yes? Why do you ask?"

"You seem all angsty," Dream pointed out bluntly since he knew that Techno always liked things honest and straight to the point.

Techno shrugged, "Tommy's been talking about the upcoming fight a lot. I figured I'd check on the progress of the training."

Dream tilted his head. Techno wasn't always very expressive about himself and how he felt, but Dream could tell what he was talking about. Techno was, in his own way, really worried about his family and probably about everyone in general.

He remembered Techno telling him once that he usually loved working alone, something Dream could relate to. It's better when you don't have to worry about other people's safety. It's nerve-wracking to have other people rely on you for safety.

"Well the kids will be thrilled to spar with you," Dream smiled easily, "Except Ranboo that is."

Techno's mouth twitched just barely in amusement, "I see. Then I'll join you after lunch."

"Sure," Dream agreed, nodding his head. Techno turned heel and left after that, joined by Wilbur who appeared at his side almost out of no where. Dream chuckled and went back to sharpening weapons.

Lunch was a lively affair and Dream spent most of it trying not to choke on his food in laughter at all the jokes and innuendos Sapnap would spit out.

And, as expected, Tubbo and Tommy were thrilled when Techno arrived with Dream to spar with them. George and Sapnap simply rose an eyebrow but didn't comment while Ranboo had the most common reaction and looked wary to be practicing with someone so experienced in fighting.

Techno ended up claiming to practice with the kids and that left Dream with Sapnap and George, who crossed his arms, "Alright then, guess I got you both to myself."

"Guess so. What will you do with us?" Sapnap asked suggestively, wiggling his brows. Dream laughed at the disgusted look on George's face. Sapnap's flirting was all harmless fun and it was

always amusing how George reacted in particular.

"That's it. I'm not sparring with you Sapnap," George grimaced but then turned to Dream with a content little smile that short-circuited his mind for a second, "So what first Dream? Warm ups again?"

Dream opened his mouth to reply but Tubbo's loud chaotic voice filled the air before he could, "Oh! OH! Techno! Can you teach me how to punch someone so hard they go flying?!"

Dream, George, and Sapnap all looked over there and laughed as one unit when they caught Techno's shocked look. Ranboo's eyes were so wide it was comical and Tommy was...Tommy was excited...?

"I...." Techno hesitated, looking down at Tubbo and then at the expectant look on Tommy's face, "I don't know if you can do that?"

Tubbo frowned and Dream decided to speak up, "I said the same thing before he threw me over his shoulder."

Techno looked at them contemplatively, like he was actually considering it, and Dream heard George gasping for air he was laughing so hard, "No...you need more training before you can do that sort of thing."

"Wait it's actually possible?" Ranboo seemed endlessly lost, raising an eyebrow. It was as if he were trying to picture someone hitting another so hard they went flying. Dream felt the beginnings of laughter bubble up in his chest.

"Well alright then," Tubbo spoke almost over Ranboo's words, "You can just teach us that another time."

"Let's just get to practicing! I'd love to get a chance to take down Techno!" Tommy grinned, his eyes still light with excitement. Tubbo grinned as well.

"You say that like you've done it before," Techno deadpanned and Dream chuckled as he looked over at his best friend and boyfriend.

Both were finally calming down from their laughter. Sapnap actually had tear marks down his cheeks, "Are you guys done?"

"That was....that was something I wasn't expecting to hear," Sapnap chuckled breathlessly, "Yeah, I'll let you practice with George first and then we can switch or something."

"Fine by me," George spoke up, shrugging as he stretched his arms, "Let's just get this over with."

Dream swallowed hard as they both wordlessly stretched and then got in their positions with Sapnap observing them off to the side.

Dream was impressed and actually very relieved with George's progress. He wasn't kidding when he told George that he was talented when he tried hard and he *was* trying hard to remember everything he was being taught. Like him and Sapnap, George was also a bit competitive and wanted to win against them. This helped give him incentive to get better.

The kids weren't bad either. Purpled came eventually and replaced Techno in helping Tubbo, Ranboo, and Tommy practice. This was good because Techno didn't go easy on anyone, not even his little brother. If anything Dream noticed how much harder he was on Tommy about the practices, but he understood where it was coming from and Tommy didn't seem as bothered about it as his whining suggested.

After practice Dream silently walked by George and eyed his side profile. George was sweating, of course, and Dream's eyes trailed across a few drops that ran down his chest or his biceps before catching himself and looking away with an internal curse.

As soon as everyone was gathered, Techno had everyone packing up to move again. They were still a day and a half away from the camp and Dream knew Techno wanted to make good time so that they didn't leave the village alone for too long.

Dream found it easier to focus on riding as Tubbo chatted to him again, excitedly rambling about the practices and things he wanted to learn how to do, asking Dream if he thought some things were impossible when they *clearly* were. Dream suspected he acted so chaotic like that just because he wanted to hear someone laugh.

And then a few hours into riding, something odd happened.

They'd exited the forest of the taiga biome they'd been traveling through thus far and finally spotted the desert biome. The only thing odd was that there was a noticeable group of people in a camp and what looked like the beginnings of buildings behind them in the desert.

"What the-" Skeppy broke off as Techno stopped his horse with tense shoulders. Everyone else slowed to a stop behind him.

"Wait here, I'll talk to them," Phil said seriously and before Techno could even refuse, Phil was urging his horse closer.

Dream kept his eyes pinned on the group ahead, noticing how the entire group was watching them

warily, though no one looked hostile. At least not yet. He glanced and met Sapnap's serious gaze before Dream peeked at George. He seemed calm, quietly staring ahead.

Tubbo peered around Dream's back, "I bet they're just travelers looking to build a village here."

"It wasn't on the map so maybe," Schlatt agreed and Techno just hummed, his eyes never leaving Phil who had just arrived and appeared to be talking quickly with the group. None of them pointed weapons at Phil.

"It's actually good that Phil went," Puffy explained with a tiny smile, "Techno's too intimidating and we don't want to appear threatening."

"I'm not threatening," Techno rose an eyebrow at her while Tommy and Wilbur laughed in the background.

"Yes you are," Wilbur grinned out and Techno sighed deeply. Dream chuckled, "Even when you're smiling you're threatening."

"Technoblade smiles?" Schlatt asked incredulously and Tubbo barked out laughter behind Dream at the same time Skeppy and Purpled did.

"Not much," Techno grumbled, glaring at Schlatt and Wilbur. Puffy giggled behind her hand. Schlatt still seemed blind-sided.

"Um, it looks like Phil's done talking," Ranboo spoke up almost warily, watching everyone.

Dream turned to see Phil riding towards them and he smiled when he got close enough, "I don't think they're affiliated with the pillagers. They know *about* them and when I told them vaguely about what we're doing they said we could stay there for the night."

"Hmm," Techno hummed again, his eyes narrowing in contemplation.

Dream eyed the other villagers again but no one looked to be doing anything suspicious. They were just watching them curiously, some of them still looked understandably wary. He noticed how few kept looking between Techno, Dream, and Ranboo.

"I think we should do it," Purpled shrugged and Techno looked over at him with an eyebrow raised, "There's so many more of us than them so if there's a chance they try anything we can just fight back. I already know some of us will keep watch as usual too so..."

Techno looked at the small group again and nodded, "True. How does everyone feel about

camping here?"

"Not worried about it," Tommy answered immediately while Tubbo nodded ecstatically. Ranboo and Puffy just remained silent.

"Let's do it," Sapnap yawned out, "It's going to get dark in a few hours anyways."

"And the pillager base is still about a day's ride away," Schlatt added with approval in his gaze.

Techno stared at them all and then looked at Phil, who nodded, and said with a low rumble, "Alright. Let's tie up the horses and go greet them I guess."

Dream did just that, making sure to keep close to George and keeping his eye out for Sapnap. Tubbo just bounded over to Tommy with Ranboo following behind them hesitantly. Purpled stuck with Puffy, Schlatt, and an oddly quietly Skeppy.

George grabbed one of Dream's arms, looping it with one of his own and holding his hand. Dream smiled down at him and George, with his glasses pushed down on his face, looked up at him and smiled softly. Affection swelled in his chest and it was so distracting that he almost walked straight into Puffy at one point.

They all maneuvered as a group quietly and tried to appear non-threatening to the regular villagers. They still seemed wary but none had weapons pointed at them so that's nice. Phil smiled, "So, this is everyone."

After a quick round of introductions, one of the villagers who seemed the oldest came forth and smiled, "Welcome. Sorry we don't have more to offer you all."

"It's alright," Wilbur said with an easy smile, "Thank you for sharing your campsite with us."

"It's the least we can do," An older woman replied kindly as she came up to the other villager and wrapped an arm around his waist. They must be together, "Those pillagers have always been giving trouble to the villages around here."

"You were saying how they once pillaged through your old village, right?" Phil spoke up quietly, a frown forming on his face.

Another young woman nodded, a sad look to her face, "That's why we traveled here- not too far from our old place to build a new home for ourselves."

"I see," Techno drawled in a low rumble as he eyed the beginnings of houses behind the new

group, "We'll take care of them and no one will have to suffer by them again."

The group brightened and Dream smiled to himself, steeling himself even more for the important mission ahead. They wouldn't be just helping themselves or even just *their* village. This made him feel somewhat heroic.

"We'll help you set up your camp," A young man offered and Techno stared at him for a moment before nodding and ordering some of their own village warriors to help as per usual.

Dream pulled George along with him, not wanting to be apart just in case, and they both worked on setting up their tent. The other group seemed friendly enough, chatting excitedly with Dream's friends as they helped set up tents and blankets.

It almost got awkward though, when one of the younger villagers who looked to be almost 13 or 14 hovered closer to Ranboo and rose an eyebrow at him, rudely asking, "What the hell even are you?"

The whole camp went quiet as Ranboo's eyes went wide and he paled, his black side getting noticeably grayer. Dream noticed George stand abruptly with a pissed expression on his face and one of the other group's villagers cried out, "*Josh!*"

"U-Uh I-...I-I'm um," Ranboo stammered, holding both his hands together like he was trying to prevent them from shaking. It wasn't working. Dream felt mild anger rise up in his chest.

"He's an Endermen hybrid!" Tubbo answered with a blank smile, his eyes staring holes into the kid as he took to Ranboo's side while Tommy crossed his arms and glared at the other kid from behind Tubbo.

The kid, Josh or whatever, blinked rapidly as most of the other group looked startled by the revelation. Tubbo continued, putting a hand on Ranboo's shoulder the best he could with their comical height difference. He had to stand on his toes to do it, "Isn't he awesome? He's better than us regular humans!"

"Uh, what are you talking about Tubbo?" Ranboo looked down at him with an eyebrow raised, suddenly sounding so much more normal that Dream noticed Phil and Techno lose the tension in their shoulders. George chuckled at Dream's side, "I don't think I'm better than regular humans!"

"You are though," Tubbo grinned out, his eyes twinkling with mirth and Dream shook his head in amusement. Tommy's mouth quirked up in a smile.

"And Josh, you can't just ask questions in that way!" One of the other villagers scolded, presumably the boy's mother and he complained as he was herded away, "I'm so sorry about that!"

Ranboo seemed taken off guard by the the apology, like he wasn't expecting one, and that made Dream feel a bit sad for him, "I-It's okay."

"It's not okay," Tommy muttered under his breath, eyeing the other kid once more with annoyance and Ranboo looked at him in confusion.

"C'mon, these tents won't get set up themselves," The oldest looking villager clapped his hands, looking stern as he looked at his people. Techno gave him an appraising look and nodded along, pushing Wilbur along to follow him.

Dream turned back to George, who was already back to unpacking some things. Dream wordlessly got started setting up the tent again, laughing when Sapnap did a goofy little move when he passed them. Sapnap laughed as well while George shook his head with a smile.

He got their tent strung up and secured before helping George with arranging their belongings inside. When Dream stepped out to triple-check the ties, he noticed Skeppy huffing in frustration with his own tent.

"Be right back George," Dream called into the tent and George rose an eyebrow but nodded. Dream turned and jogged over to Skeppy, who had his head in his hand, a stressed look on his face, "You okay?"

Skeppy startled and looked up at him, "Oh! Yeah, I'm just getting a little frustrated with this I guess."

Dream rose an eyebrow behind his mask. Skeppy looked more frustrated with something else than with the tent. He hadn't had a problem setting it up any other day, "I'll help."

Skeppy nodded and they got started grabbing the tarp. Dream glanced at Skeppy again and noticed the stress creased on his face. He frowned. It didn't suit Skeppy to not be loud, hyper, and all over the place.

As soon as they finished securing the ties for the tent, Dream walked over and awkwardly stood next to Skeppy. He spoke quietly, "Seriously, Skeppy, what is it? You don't look good."

Skeppy blinked at him and then looked at the ground for a silent minute, "I'm....just thinking about everything? Mainly about Bad."

"There's a shocker," Dream teased with a snicker, hoping to get a smile or a laugh out of him. Skeppy gave him a ghost of a smile that didn't reach his eyes, "Bad'll be okay, Skeppy."

"I know..." Skeppy trailed off and sighed, crossing his arms, "It's just..."

Skeppy was hesitating again, like he was afraid of telling someone his honest feelings. Dream could understand, "It's just...? You don't have to tell me, dude, I'm just worried about you."

Skeppy looked at him in surprise again and this time a more genuine smile took over his face, "Oh...really? Well I....thanks."

Dream chuckled, "No problem. I mean, we're friends right? I thought you knew that."

"I mean, yeah..." Skeppy shifted awkwardly, "Anyways...I'm just bothered thinking about what's going to happen. Bad didn't really want me to come on the mission. He wanted me to forgive and forget, you know? I just can't though."

Dream nodded empathically. Dream will *never* forgive the pillagers and he'll definitely never forget. It made sense that Bad, who preferred no conflict or fighting, would encourage Skeppy to do the same as him.

"That's where Bad and I are different. I still have...." Skeppy paused and looked at Dream with slight embarrassment, "I still have nightmares.....frequently. They are usually me waking up in the cell and figuring out all this has been a....dream."

Dream felt himself pale. He'd only been in the cells then for a couple of days. Skeppy and everyone else had been there months or even *years*. He couldn't imagine what having a dream like that would be like. Dream immediately worried that Sapnap had dreams like those.

"Oh..." Dream choked out uselessly, "That....that sucks."

Skeppy nodded, frowning, "Bad is a huge help during those times but...he doesn't want me to act on on my rage. I can't help it though. The pillagers took a lot from not just *me*. I want them to be dead so I don't have to worry about them anymore."

"That's normal and it makes sense," Dream replied seriously, "Almost all of us feel that way. Including the kids."

"Yeah..." Skeppy sighed, "I guess I'm just worried that Bad's going to be disappointed in me for killing the pillagers."

Dream was quiet for a few long seconds and he bit his gum before replying, "Bad will understand. You won't be *cruelly* killing people. In a way, you're protecting yourself and others from them. Bad....he did the same for me and George when we all traveled together you know."

Skeppy's eyes went wide, "What? He....h-he did?"

Dream nodded, hoping he didn't overstep by saying that, "He'll understand, especially because he cares about you, so don't worry anymore okay?"

Skeppy's eyes were still wide but he did look a little more content just by talking to Dream. He felt accomplished, "Thanks Dream."

"No problem," Dream grinned with his teeth, relieved, "I'm going back to George now but come find us if you need anything."

"Alright," Skeppy smiled, amused. Dream turned and ran back to his tent. He spotted George still inside, sorting through their things.

He went in and hugged George from behind, curling his long legs around George until he was trapping him in his embrace. George gasped in surprise before relaxing into Dream immediately after, "Jeez, where did you even come from?"

Dream wheezed and squeezed George's waist to get a protesting noise before answering, "Outside."

George rolled his eyes, not amused, "Well what were you evening going to do?"

"Talk to Skeppy," Dream said, dropping his head into George's shoulder. George felt nice and warm. Dream loved cuddling with him, "Cheered him up, I think? He was worried."

"Oh..." George spoke, sounding like he was getting worried himself. Dream chuckled.

"It's okay now, he's better," Dream told him and George relaxed again.

"By the way, Sapnap came and borrowed one of your extra ropes while you were gone," George laughed out, "So you're probably never seeing that again."

Dream sighed, shaking his head in fake disappointment. George laughed some more, "Oh well. Cuddle me and make me feel better about it."

"About losing a rope?" George asked, laughter still in his voice. Dream laughed with him, "You're already cuddling me though."

"But you're not cuddling me back," Dream pouted and George sighed, putting down the bag he was

sorting through to turn around. Dream loosened his grip and helped him.

Now they were face to face and Dream smiled triumphantly. George rose an eyebrow at him, "What?"

"Nothing," Dream said, resisting the urge to pull George flush against him until not a single inch of space was left. George just hummed, staring at his mask, "Want me to take it off?"

"No you don't have to," George reassured and Dream smiled gently. George was so understanding, "I'm used to the mask, it's got its own charm I suppose especially since it came from your sister."

Dream felt a jolt in his heart. He remembered telling George about that back when they first met but it felt like so long ago. George frowned, "Sorry...I shouldn't have brought that up."

"It's okay..." Dream remarked quietly, "I was just surprised by how long ago it felt that I told you about that."

George nodded and Dream felt delight rush through him when George shifted closer to Dream to wrap his arms around his neck. For some George was still staring at his mask contemplatively, "You been okay? I feel like you haven't since today started."

While Dream felt happy for George's concern he didn't really want George to know the embarrassing truth that he's been distracted by how horny he's been for George since the morning. Nor that it has been a reoccurring problem.

"It's nothing," Dream insisted and leaned close to George's face, "Can I?"

George stared at him for a second longer before smiling, "Yeah."

Dream immediately brushed his lips against George's and pressed his own smile on George's, watching behind his mask as George opened his eyes and rose an eyebrow when he didn't move further.

"Dream?" George asked but as soon as he opened his mouth Dream dove right in and George gasped loudly. Dream felt him struggle to adjust for a minute and chuckled into George's mouth.

He was getting used to mapping George's mouth with his tongue but Dream was sure he'd never get tired of kissing George. Ever. Dream hummed in content and wrapped one arm further around George's waist, pushing his body closer to Dream's.

Dream used his other hand to lift George's chin and he leaned his face in a different position so that

he could deepen the kiss. He felt a thrill go through him when George whimpered and quickly grab onto his shirt where his chest was, his pinky accidentally brushing against Dream's nipple.

After a minute or two George tried to pull away to speak, "D-Dream, wait..."

Dream leaned back only a fraction, his mouth still hovering over George's. Both were panting in each other's mouth and Dream could feel the want from before building again. He really just wanted to press more into George and never stop kissing him. He wanted George so much, "Yeah?"

"We have to go," George mumbled, looking into Dream's mask with a small frown, "Don't get me worked up like that."

George's slight scolding tone made Dream feel rejected again and he couldn't help but worry. He respected and loved George; he'd *never* push George into anything and he understood that George was very private about showing this kind of affection.

So why did he feel so rejected?

Dream shifted back, letting George go and he avoiding looking George in the eye, suddenly angry at himself for feeling so worked up about it when it wasn't a big deal. He couldn't help the tiny little voice in his head that told him George didn't want Dream as much as Dream wanted George.

George's face was still red and he was fixing his hair carefully, not looking bothered in the slightest. Dream's fingers twitched and he started drumming them against his leg as he moved around, not wanting to stay still.

"Let's go find Sapnap," George eventually said, smiling. Dream was sort of glad he couldn't tell how upset Dream was internally, "You good?"

It took Dream a minute to realize George was referring to the growing tent in his pants and he nodded, taking a deep breath and forcing himself to smile sheepishly, "Um, give me a minute? I'll come find you guys and we can maybe practice or spar."

George nodded, still smiling, "Alright."

Dream waited until he left their shared tent before allowing his face to drop. He curled his restless fingers into fists and clenched his teeth together. Why did he have to be like this? He was really out here getting this distracted and that just wouldn't do.

Not only was he making George uncomfortable being so forward when they were surrounded by their friends, but him being *this* distracted could get someone hurt.

He needed to chill out and destress. Dream sighed, closing his eyes and taking in deep breaths. He repeated this until he felt slightly calmer and his problem disappeared.

Dream pushed back some of his insecurities and walked out of the tent to search for Sapnap and George.

When Dream finally found them, George was laughing as he watched Tommy try to replicate a move Philza had just shown. Sapnap and Tubbo were off sparring on the other side, both with matching levels of excitement. Ranboo was at George's side looking surprisingly relaxed as he watched Philza with awe.

"Hey guys..." Dream greeted and, at first, only Ranboo and George heard him. George smiled at him and Dream felt his heart skip a beat, an almost nauseous feeling forming in his stomach.

"*Dream!*" Tommy shouted, nearly making him jump. Tommy was grinning widely, "You missed it! I was able to not only kick Ranboo in the stomach but I was able to get out of his hold! It felt fantastic!"

"That's true. Not the fantastic part though," Ranboo grimaced, his arm curling around his stomach at the memory. George laughed louder.

"Well I told you that you'd get the hang of it the more you tried," Dream grinned and Tommy beamed under his words. Dream exchanged a glance with Phil, who dipped his head gratefully.

"I was just showing them a few things I know," Phil explained with a tiny smile, "I helped train Techno you know."

Dream nodded, interest flaring up. Phil did raise Techno so that did make sense. He knew that Phil was talented as a fighter but he'd yet to spar with him nor has he seen him fight. He glanced over to where Tubbo and Sapnap were still sparring together.

Tommy looked over to where he was glancing, "Tubbo wanted to go ahead and spar without waiting for you. He was feeling restless and wanted to jump around."

"I understand that feeling," Dream laughed but Tommy was still staring in Tubbo's direction. He didn't know what to make of the thoughtful expression so he moved the topic along, "Who wants to practice with me first?"

Dream barely withheld wheezing laughter when Ranboo shifted a little closer to George before stopping, as if he were going to hide behind him yet realized he was taller than anyone else and couldn't. George's mouth twitched in amusement.

"Me!" Tommy said loudly as he turned back around and Dream rolled his eyes at the predictable situation.

"Alright then," Dream looked over at Ranboo and had an idea. He turned to Phil, "If you're not busy with anything why don't you continue showing moves to Ranboo?"

Phil, who seemed to be exceptionally good at reading unhidden messages in people's gazes, appeared to realize what Dream had. Ranboo was comfortable around Phil, "Sure. No problem. Is that okay with you, mate?"

Ranboo's eyes went wide but he nodded excitedly and George laughed, pushing him gently towards Phil, "I'll wait my turn then Dream."

Dream nodded, not trusting his words and mindlessly lured Tommy a safe distance away to begin practicing. Luckily for him, Tommy's presence was very distracting in itself so he was able to actually focus on their sparring. Tommy really wasn't a bad fighter at all. In fact, he was more advanced for someone his age. Growing up with Phil and Techno seemed to be a great advantage for him.

A few years from now Dream reckoned that Tommy would be *hell* to take on. He found himself looking forward to it. As Dream made Tommy go through the motions of dodging Dream's attempt to grab him, both of them jumped when a loud voice interrupted their focus.

"Looking good guys!" Wilbur said loudly, obviously excited to have startled them. Dream schooled his expression as Tommy looked over at him with aggravation. Wilbur just laughed.

"Jesus, don't just come out of no where," Sapnap growled out and Dream realized he and Tommy weren't the only ones caught off guard. Tubbo was blinking rapidly, Phil's eyes were wide for a second, and Ranboo had a hand on his heart. George appeared to be the only one calm.

"Sorry, sorry," Wilbur grinned, lifting his hands, "Can I borrow Tubbo for a few minutes?"

Tubbo tilted his head, shifting almost endlessly, "Why? I was just getting started!"

Sapnap and George chuckled. Dream felt his mouth lift a fraction at Tubbo's exuberance. Wilbur laughed again, "Well *you* were the one that wanted to talk through explosives with me right?"

Tubbo's eyes brightened, "Oh! Oh yeah!"

"Y-You're gonna handle explosives?" Ranboo asked in horror, looking seconds away from passing out. Phil's eyes widened at him and for some reason Tommy laughed at Ranboo's expense.

"He won't handle them directly, Ranboo. Tubbo actually knows a lot about explosives though." Wilbur explained with a look of amusement. Tubbo nodded, snickering at Ranboo, "Let's go Tubbo, I'll show you the explosives I brought with me."

"Yup!" Tubbo cheered, turning and bouncing over to Wilbur, "Thanks for sparring with me Sapnap!"

"Sure man," Sapnap grinned out, crossing his arms, "Guess I can focus on Gogy now."

George looked startled for a second before sighing. Dream felt briefly amused. Tommy shouted after Tubbo and Wilbur, "Don't cause any forest fires!"

Phil chuckled, shaking his head, "It's not like they're actually setting anything off.....I hope."

Ranboo shot him an alarmed look and that made Dream finally laugh.

Chapter End Notes

I wanted this chapter to be long, but not too long because of how much less time I have to write now! I'll go ahead and warn you all now that there WILL be smut in the next chapter because....Dream. 😊😊

Let me know what you think! You guys stay safe and enjoy your week! Thanks to so many of you who are so understanding towards me! 😊

Chapter 32

Chapter Summary

George notices changes in Dream's behavior and draws the wrong conclusion from it. Dream remedies this and the two share a heated moment.

In which Dream is struggling cause he's frustratingly horny and George is clueless.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Hope you are all well! I know how long you've all been waiting and I just wanna say how awesome you guys are! Those of you that were supportive of why it's been taking me so much longer to update now mean so much to me!

I've had so much going on from my full-time job, taking care of family, and just trying to manage my time. However I want you to know that I'm NOT dropping this story, it just may take me some time now and again to finish writing things! Especially since I edit my own writing too!

Thanks again for being so understanding. Sending much love through the net!

WARNING: THERE WILL BE SMUT IN THIS CHAPTER! I'll indicate where it starts so that those of you uncomfortable can skip, but well....it's a big majority of this chapter. Sorry! ☺

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

George didn't understand Dream about 80% of the time. He guessed that should scare him, given the nature of their relationship, yet George liked trying to figure Dream out.

What George didn't like, however, was being blatantly avoided or lied to. It felt like Dream was doing both now. Was it because George didn't want to be intimate with him? George felt a swell of negative emotions settle as a lump in his throat. Self-doubt and self-hatred that was ever present in the back of his mind kept trying to resurface.

No, he was being ridiculous. Dream wasn't mad at him over something so stupid. Dream was always kind to him, almost to the point where it was foolish. George sighed, earning Skeppy's attention.

Everyone was currently packing to leave the strangers' encampment. Techno insisted on it so that they could stay on schedule. If all went well, they'd be arriving near the pillager's base within nightfall, where they'd make their final campsite.

"What's up Gogy?" Skeppy asked with a curious tilt of his head. George was left wondering how that nickname was already spreading so fast. He decided not to question it, even if it was an absurd nickname.

"Nothing," George assured, quickly taking his eyes off Dream. His boyfriend had been hauling off large amounts of supplies with Sapnap and Tommy, all three competing like children at who could carry the most. Tubbo was cheering them on.

"If you say so," Skeppy hummed nonchalantly, already turning back to finish packing together folded up tents. George found it a bit amusing that Skeppy didn't pester or tease the answer out of him like he usually would.

George decided to temporarily forgo his worrying as he helped Skeppy pack up the rest of the tents. Everyone had their own little jobs and as Techno was calling everyone to gather their horses, George noticed Phil exchanging friendly words with the elder of the villager group. He briefly marveled at how friendly all the strangers were acting towards Phil already, wanting to exchange a way to contact him- asking him to come visit.

He was left wishing *he* could be so likeable.

Dream caught George's attention once again when the taller male stepped in his line of sight. Dream was avoiding direct eye contact with him through the eyeholes of his mask as he approached George and that made George frown again, "George, you all set with your horse?"

"Yeah. You still sharing with Tubbo?" George questioned, trying to keep his voice even and light.

"Yeah," Dream nodded, shifting on his feet and almost swinging his arms. George could suffocate on the awkward tension in the air. Did Dream notice it too? Was George just overthinking again? "I doubt he's comfortable being that close to Schlatt anyway."

George hummed, realizing that were true. Schlatt was obviously trying in his own weird ways to gain Tubbo's affections, but one can't force someone to be comfortable with them, "You're probably right."

"Mhm," Dream replied, looking at him briefly. George immediately felt self-conscious for no reason. He didn't really brush through his hair or care much about his outfit when they woke up. Did he look odd?

George nervously pulled at his brown long-sleeved shirt. It was a little tighter than he usually liked his clothes but that's due to the fact he had purchased the wrong size. Something conflicting went through Dream's eyes and he glanced away from George again.

He didn't even get the chance to wonder about it before Dream swiftly turned, "I better go drag Tubbo away from Ranboo and Tommy if we want any hope of leaving on time."

George forced a humorless chuckle out of his lips, "Okay Dream..."

His face fell as soon as Dream walked away. What in the ever living hell was *that*? Why did he stare so intensely, look conflicted, and then just leave like that?! George bit his gum.

"George!" A hand clamped down on his shoulder and he almost yelped, jumping out of his own skin. Luckily for him, Sapnap just laughed off his startled reaction, "I'm so ready for this!! We'll be close to the outpost by tonight and I can show off my skills to you when the mission starts!"

"Right...." George felt calmer and smirked at Sapnap, "What skills?"

Sapnap rolled his eyes and wrapped an arm around George's shoulders, "George, my guy, you haven't known me too long. I'm such a good fighter that when you see me lighting it up in there you'll go *'Oh my God! Sapnap's so fucking cool! I'm glad to be his best friend!'*"

The fake high-pitched voice Sapnap used to imitate him forced a true laugh out of George and he almost couldn't stop laughing after. Sapnap began laughing at his own childish antics too.

When George finally calmed down enough he grinned, "You do remember that I'll be protecting the kids right? I won't even get to see these imaginary skills of yours."

Sapnap sighed, "You disappoint me, dude. What do you mean imaginary? Just you wait. You'll be surprised."

In all seriousness George didn't doubt that. Sapnap survived years of fighting to stay alive while he was a prisoner to the pillagers. That wasn't some off-written feat.

"Fine, fine," George mused, crossing his arms, "Maybe I *will* be surprised."

"Yup!" Sapnap cheered, pulling away from George suddenly when everyone started mounting their horses, "Oh shit, talk to you later!"

George laughed as Sapnap scrambled back to his horse. He shook his head and jumped up on his own horse, lightly petting its neck to calm it down. Techno waited as Phil was the last one on his horse before turning to the village elder.

"Thank you again for your hospitality," He said and the elder beamed at him.

"You're welcome! It was nice meeting you all," The elder replied kindly and dipped his head in respect. Techno pulled an awkward face at that and both Wilbur and Tommy snickered.

"Good luck with your mission," The elder's wife smiled towards them and George shoved away the sad part of him that suddenly remembered his mom, "We wish good fortune for you all!"

"Thank you," Phil smiled softly, "We wish the same to you."

They and the villagers behind them smiled in return. Phil nudged his horse away from them and towards Techno, who nodded at him before turning to everyone with the map in one hand, "Let's go then."

"Yes, onward!" Tubbo laughed out, pointing a first forward and almost knocking Dream's mask off with it. George frowned at how startled Dream was at the action, more than what should be usual, like he was caught out of a daydream. That had been happening frequently the past few days.

Techno rolled his eyes but said nothing as urged his horse forward.

The desert was decidedly not one of George's favorite biomes. There just didn't seem to be enough life around them and definitely not enough water. Techno decided to keep close to the oak forest barely seen just left of the desert. It took them off the main path on the map but wouldn't put any big kinks in their plans.

George was *definitely* fine with it. Who wants to camp out surrounded by nothing but desert sand and almost no water? If Technoblade, Dream, or Phil weren't worried about this small change of plan, then George definitely wasn't.

The rest of the day riding passed in a blur as they traveled on the line of the desert and oak biome. George kept glancing over at Dream, but thankfully he seemed a bit more focused than before. He admittedly looked a little exhausted though and George couldn't help but worry about him.

When the sun began to set, Philza urged everyone to keep going a little longer because they were almost to the planned campsite.

George felt a surge of butterflies in his stomach, but not the good kind. He knew they were close, but if they were almost at the planned campsite that meant they were close to the pillager outpost. He felt conflicted about it.

Everyone else seemed to quiet down at that bit of news as well. George glanced over at Dream again who either didn't notice he was being stared at or refused to look in George's direction. George scowled and looked away, catching the tail-end of Sapnap's serious expression.

Sapnap blinked when he noticed George staring at him and grinned, showing off teeth and George

felt a little bit of tension melt away at the familiar grin, smiling back.

They traveled for only half an hour more before Phil and Techno agreed they should stop to make camp near the oak forest right outside the desert. George was glad to finally be off the horse, his legs felt about as useful as shaky jello.

"Whose helping me set up the fire tonight?" Skeppy asked, looking over his shoulder as everyone started getting off their horses and tying them up. George watched Purpled and Puffy come over, "Ah thanks!"

"No problem," Purpled said lightly, already grabbing sticks while Skeppy and Puffy grabbed rocks.

"We still have enough meat right?" Techno questioned, turning to Phil and Schlatt, who were both surprisingly talking calmly about something George couldn't hear from where he was.

Phil nodded, "Yeah, mate. Everything's in one of the bags I have, hold on."

George flinched when Wilbur flopped to the ground close to him with an overly-dramatic sigh, "My body hurts!"

Sapnap snorted, already grabbing his rolled-up tent and trying to find a spot for it, "Your body hurts after just a little bit of riding?"

"A *little* bit?" George spat back in disbelief and Sapnap laughed at the look on his face.

"Pussies," Tommy commented and George's mouth fell open in shock, glancing over at Phil who either heard that and didn't care or didn't hear it at all.

Tubbo laughed loudly, skipping over to Wilbur, "Don't worry Wilbur! We only have a few days ride back after this."

Wilbur groaned, laying back starfish on the ground, "Then I *can't* ride with Tommy. The little gremlin talks way too loudly *all* the time!"

"I do *not*!" Tommy yelled at him and George felt a corner of his lip curve up before his eyes caught Dream suddenly walking into view to hand off supplies to Technoblade.

George caught his eye and then felt a spark of anger when Dream whirled around to say something to Techno again. What the hell? Was he really avoiding and ignoring George?

Before he had much time to get really upset, Techno turned and cleared his throat, "All right, now that the fire's going I feel now is the best time to go over all the details of the plan since we are at the final campsite."

Groans resounded through the camp but George didn't feel amused this time. Puffy sighed, "C'mon guys, I know it's tiring going over it so many times but it *is* useful."

Techno nodded at her, his expression neutral as he turned to everyone else. Phil crossed his arms and spoke seriously, "Let's just go over everything again for the sake of it, okay?"

Schlatt apparently chose that moment to speak from where he was sitting crisscross on the ground with a bag in front of him, "Well, to start with, we're splitting up in groups with at least one person having a communicator, right?"

"Yes," Phil nodded seriously, staring right at Schlatt, "And we aren't engaging the enemy at all the first couple of days."

"Right, because we need to scout it first," Skeppy retorted, the unusual seriousness almost weird for him.

"That's correct," Techno agreed, looking around at everyone, "It's the smartest move to make. First we scout the outpost, taking note of all exits and anything in particular that could be useful regarding the pillagers."

"We do this for a couple hours and then meet back right here, right?" Puffy asked as she looked around at the beginnings of their campsite.

George heart did a little flip when Dream finally spoke, "Yeah, to exchange information on everything we learned."

"A couple hours for two days should be enough information gathering but we'll see," Techno commented with a little twist to his lips, "Again the actual attack will wait until we know what we're dealing with."

"And I have the explosives ready for when *we* are ready!" Wilbur grinned, a manic look to his eyes that had George wondering how sane Wilbur actually was. Tommy just laughed so maybe he shouldn't be too concerned. At least Wilbur is on their side, "I gave some to Tubbo too!"

"Come again?" Schlatt asked loudly, his eyes widening as he looked over at Tubbo quickly, "You have explosives kid?!"

"Yup!" Tubbo nodded with a big grin and George shuddered for some reason, "They're nothing

crazy though so don't look so worried Boo!"

Everyone seemed confused for a moment on who Tubbo referred to until it became obvious he was talking about Ranboo, who was sitting on the ground quietly behind Tubbo and Tommy. Ranboo's brow was furrowed.

"Bombs aren't toys," Ranboo muttered and Phil nodded though he looked more amused than alarmed.

"I know what I'm doing," Tubbo chuckled, patting Ranboo's arm, "Like I said, they aren't anything big scale like what Wilbur has."

"Mine have to be bigger scale though," Wilbur added almost defensively when Phil glanced at him. Techno just tilted his head.

"Anyways," Dream cleared his throat and George's eyes immediately went to him, "We'll start sneaking around and observing the outpost in the morning."

"Again, *just* information gathering," Techno stressed and George couldn't help the little smile that formed on his face when Techno looked over at Tommy and Tubbo, "No chaos.....yet."

"Yes sir!" They saluted playfully, not even looking shocked at how they said it simultaneously. If George hadn't known the truth, he could swear they were twins.

"Um, I'm...I'm sorry," Ranboo spoke up and everyone looked over at him in concern at the shakiness in his voice, "The, uh, what were the groups again?"

George saw Techno's lips downturn a little in concealed concern. He suddenly remembered that Ranboo tended to forget things sometimes. Ranboo stared at the ground, his shoulders hunching in a little at all the staring. George immediately looked away, feeling bad.

"It's okay, mate," Phil spoke gently, smiling though it didn't reach his eyes, "Dream and Techno are one group of two. They are going to be scouting the closest to the base so that's why it's just them."

Ranboo hummed, "Y-yeah and uh, I'm with Tubbo and Tommy and G-George, right?"

"And me," Purpled added and Ranboo looked at him before quickly looking away, nodding.

"Skeppy, Puffy, and Sapnap are in another group that will be scouting close to where you guys should scout," Techno told him and George glanced at Sapnap, who was just staring out into the forest around them blandly. George wondered what he was thinking about.

"Which leaves me with Wilbur and Schlatt," Phil said aloud and Schlatt glanced over at him with a spark of something withheld in his gaze. Maybe they still weren't getting along.

"Each of our groups except mine and Techno's will have our village warriors with us," Dream explained and George was often so focused on his friends that he forgot about the village warriors that came with them. Most of them standing in the background.

"You're writing this down?" Tommy questioned and George glanced back over at the trio to see Ranboo writing in a small notebook.

Ranboo looked at him, his shoulders still hunched over a little, almost defensively, "It helps me remember things better. I didn't write it down last time"

Tubbo elbowed Tommy in the ribs and Tommy grunted, glaring at Tubbo before throwing up hands in a 'surrender' gesture, "I didn't say it was bad or anything. You do you Ranboob."

Ranboo spluttered whilst everyone started cracking up at the nickname. George barely smothered a chuckle himself, "Please don't ever call me that again."

Tommy's blue eyes sparkled with mischief, "No promises big man."

Ranboo looked at him flatly, closing his little notebook and Tubbo was still laughing, leaning on Tommy. Phil shook his head fondly at the trio before turning to everyone, "Let's just get our camp set up, alright? We have a long night ahead of us, especially those of us keeping watch in shifts."

With Phil's words everyone started to break off once again to set up the camp. George focused on setting up his and Dream's tent while Dream was doing God knows what. As George strung up their tent, he searched around the campsite for Dream.

Dream was hauling down one of the chests filled with equipment for everyone and George's eyes widened at how effortlessly he was handling it. That *had* to be heavy right? Jesus, how was he just lifting it up like that?

George's face turned red when he realized he was staring open-mouth for so long that drool was literally about to run past his lips. What the fuck? George whipped his head around, feeling mortified and so flustered about it that he nearly toppled all his progress with the tent.

He must have made more noise trying to keep the tent from falling apart than he realized because he suddenly he felt eyes on him. George turned back around, his face reddening again when he caught Dream staring at him, the chest now at his feet.

Once George met his eyes, Dream turned his head so fast that his mask shifted on his face a little. Dream hurried to fix it but George felt the reddening from embarrassment turn into red from anger. What the hell is his problem?

George has had enough. He can't start an important mission worrying about whatever the hell is going on with Dream!

George stood abruptly and startled a couple of the village warriors around him. He ignored that and marched over to Dream, grabbing his wrist in a tight grip. Dream whirled around to face him, startled, his eyes going wide behind the mask.

"Purpled?" George called, looking around for the purple-clad male. Purpled poked his head out of the beginnings of his tent, "You and Sapnap can team to train with the kids tonight."

"Huh?" Purpled rose an eyebrow at the mention of their usual evening training. George glared and Purpled straightened, surprised, "Uh, yeah, okay?"

"George?" Dream asked, sounding confused and George felt more anger build up. He had to know what he did! Why's he acting like he has no idea why George is mad?

"Awww I wanted to try kicking Dream's ass today- wait where are you going?!" Tommy broke off his original sentence to yell after them as George tightened his grip on Dream's wrist and walked away, tugging Dream along with him.

Dream just followed along without resistance, letting George lead him away from the campsite. George tactfully ignored everyone's confused expression as they watched them leave. The only one he didn't ignore was Sapnap, who stared after them in confusion and worry. He shot Sapnap what he hoped was a reassuring look and Sapnap rose an eyebrow but seemed to relax after that.

"Where are we going?" Dream questioned somewhat quietly as George continued walking away from camp, "We shouldn't go out too far."

"We need to talk and it's best the others don't hear me yelling at you," George ground out, trying to be mindful of his grip on Dream's wrist.

"Y-Yelling? Why? George what's-" Dream cut himself off when George sent him a withering glare from over his shoulder. Dream went silent but this time he looked more alarmed than confused.

George walked into the woods further and after a couple more minutes of walking he deemed them far enough to have a personal and probably yelling-filled conversation. He turned and noticed that Dream was shifting almost like he was nervous. Dream wasn't looking at George.

"George I'm sorry for whatever I did to make you angry," Dream blurted and George let go of Dream's wrist, practically feeling his eyebrows shoot up to his hairline in shock and disbelief.

"You really don't know what you're doing?" George asked rhetorically and Dream finally looked him in the face, cocking his head in confusion.

"I d-don't really...what's wrong? I mean, things were okay yesterday and the days before," Dream replied uneasily, looking wary. George couldn't believe it.

"Seriously...? Dream you've been practically ignoring me all day!" George felt his eyes burn with tears and he couldn't decide if it was because he was upset or because he was enraged. Probably a flurry of both.

Dream had the audacity to still look confused, "What? No I haven't!"

"I've literally tried to keep your gaze but every time our eyes meet you can't look away fast enough!" George growled, glaring at Dream's mask. He wished it were off so he could see Dream's expressions better, "You haven't been talking to me and honestly I've been too busy being confused to confront you about it till now!"

Dream went silent again, his eyes widening behind the mask. George stayed silent for a moment because he didn't know what else to say until Dream properly replied to that. Dream must have realized George was still waiting for a response because he crossed his arms.

"Well I've just been busy thinking about other things! I'm sorry you think I'm ignoring you," Dream frowned with a conflicted expression. George's scowl deepened.

"What other things are you so distracted about lately? Because everyone has noticed how differently you've been acting," George responded flatly and Dream looked a tad embarrassed about that.

"I've just been worrying about the mission that's all!" Dream exclaimed and George was left wondering why he sounded slightly defensive.

"Still doesn't explain why you've been avoiding looking at me all day!" George seethed, clenching his teeth afterwards. He's never felt this mad at Dream other than the time they fought in the nether.

Dream glared at him, "You're reading into it too much. I'm not avoiding you!"

George felt the floodgates break open. Tears burned at his eyes and he couldn't help yelling, "But you *ARE*!"

Dream looked stunned that George was suddenly crying. George was so confused and frustrated and overwhelmed. He wanted to shove Dream. He wanted to push his goggles down over his eyes so Dream couldn't see him crying. He didn't do any of that though. Dream remained silent but the building anger on Dream's face vanished the moment George started crying.

"Is...is it because I won't sleep with you?" George whispered just loud enough for Dream to hear, his face burning with embarrassment and frustration and all of the above.

Dream was stunned before but now he looked panicked, flailing his arms as he immediately came close to wrap his arms around George, who accepted the embrace silently, "WHAT?! No!!"

"It sure seems like it," George muttered, sniffing. Dream squeezed him once before pushing him away just far enough so that he could rip his mask off his face, flinging it to the ground carelessly.

George's eyes widened at the sudden action and at Dream's full distraught expression. His amber eyes that George knew to be green were shiny like they were starting to fill with tears as well, his mouth downturned and almost shaking, "I never meant to make you feel like that George! It's just me, okay? I'm just....it's just..."

George could see he was struggling with what to say and laid a hand over one of Dream's that was clutching his shoulder harder than necessary. George didn't mind, "But you started being all weird after I told you I d-didn't want to....you're upset I didn't want to, right?"

"No!" Dream exclaimed and George was a bit hesitant to believe him. It must have shown on his face because Dream's fingers dug into his shoulders almost desperately, "No, I *promise* George. I'm not upset at you! I'd never push you for anything you don't want to do..."

"But?" George prompted, hearing the unfinished part of his sentence. Dream looked down, biting his lip and suddenly seeming both embarrassed and unsure, "Dream?"

"I just....started worrying.....I mean you....y-you do want me in that way right?" Dream asked quietly, his hands slowly retracting from George's shoulders as if suddenly unsure he should be touching him. Not for the first time today, George's mouth fell open in shock.

"What?!"

"I mean that first time we....did something....that really wasn't because of Schlatt's words that day, right?" Dream asked desperately, looking into George's eyes for answers as he started ranting, "You didn't just want to prove him wrong? I just started worrying that maybe you didn't want to be intimate with me and maybe you're just trying not to displease me?"

"Of course not!" George exclaimed, scowling, "That first time you made me feel so special and I

really did want to! You still think I didn't?"

Dream's eyes shifted away unsurely answered that for him. George felt floored. Dream really thought George didn't want him? Dream spoke up again hesitantly, "I was just upset with myself and unsure where we stood but I was too embarrassed to just outright ask you if you wanted me."

"I do want you that way Dream and I've told you that before," George said seriously, moving to grab Dream's hand in his. He gave it a squeeze, "But I'm a private person and the idea of doing anything out here around others makes me uncomfortable...."

"I know. And I'm not mad!" Dream replied with equal amount of seriousness. George felt a bit reassured now that Dream really wasn't upset at him for not sleeping with him, "I promise I'm not. B-But you really do think of me that way?"

"Yes...." George ducked his head, feeling his face burn at the admission, "Of course I do.....don't you?"

"About you? All the time, everyday, and that's part of the problem," Dream sighed and George's eyes widened at him. Dream's face was also burning with embarrassment, "I've been thinking about you too much...and why I was so worried maybe you didn't really think the same of me."

"Is that why you wanted to be intimate so bad those times?" George asked, feeling nervous fluttering in his abdomen. Dream was thinking about him that much.

"Yes," Dream admitted, rubbing the back of his neck and refusing to look George in the face, "George....y-you're just so beautiful and I can't stop thinking about you sometimes."

"Dreammm," George whined, hiding his face behind his eyes as his face burned impossibly more. His heart started beating out of his chest, "I-I'm not all that!"

"George," Dream huffed in amusement and George jolted when he felt his breath on his hands hiding his face, "I almost tripped over a root and faceplanted into the ground the other day because I was too busy thinking about you moaning for me."

"*Dream!*" George shrieked, looking at him like he grew three heads but Dream just wheezed at him, a big smile on his face.

"What can I say?" Dream smirked that attractive stupid fucking smirk and George gulped, "You're just so sexy that I've been unable to stop being distracted by you."

"Well try harder not to be distracted," George grumbled and Dream laughed again, stepping into George's space. George felt himself tense up a little but melted when Dream did nothing pull him

into an embrace.

"I probably won't be distracted anymore," Dream replied with an honest tone, "You made me feel better by telling me you want me."

"I hope so," George smiled and then blinked when Dream pulled away to look at him seriously again.

"And I'm really sorry again that I worried you and made you think I was mad at you," Dream frowned and George's smile grew.

"It's okay now that I know the problem is just you being a big simp for me," George grinned and then giggled when Dream rolled his eyes and laughed.

"Oh totally, the *biggest* simp," Dream retorted and George laughed again. Dream grinned and leaned his face in like he was going for a kiss but he suddenly paused, slowing like he was hesitant.

George inwardly frowned but pushed it away to lean his head up to capture Dream's lips. Dream gasped, surprised, and George smiled into the kiss. Dream wasted no time to wrap one arm around his waist and the other hand coming up to cup the back of his head, deepening the kiss.

He shuddered when Dream started pushing back more, almost desperate, and melted into his embrace. George grunted when Dream pushed him even closer and then blushed when Dream licked and nibbled at his bottom lip in an unspoken request for him to open up.

Whatever hesitancy Dream had before seemed to be thrown out the window the moment George kissed him. George shuddered at how desperately Dream was kissing him, only parting for a few second to pant at each other's mouth before Dream was engulfing his lips once again.

The hand Dream had on the back of his head lowered slightly to play with some strands of his hair. That felt strangely soothing and George hummed into the kiss.

Soon Dream parted enough for them to be able to breathe better and George gasped when Dream shoved his face into his neck, panting hard, "Sorry, I kind of....got too carried away."

A sort of warm buzzing went through George's body as he thought about everything Dream said and did. He really wanted George *that* much? The thought sent heat straight to George's groin and he squeezed his thighs together, his whole body burning.

George focused on the way Dream's hands were pressing against him and how his lips rested on the junction of his shoulder and neck in a way that was almost ticklish. He could feel Dream breathing against his neck, making him want to shiver.

"You know....we walked pretty far out here," George found himself saying before even thinking it. Dream paused, "They.....t-they probably wouldn't hear us from all the way out here."

George's face burned when Dream's arms tightened around him and his breath turned shaky against his neck, "That sounded like....is that a....?"

"Yes," George affirmed and then yelped when Dream suddenly moved his hands until he had two handfuls of George's thighs and were lifting him up effortlessly. George moved to wrap his legs around his waist and his arms around Dream's neck instinctively.

Dream was staring at him with hooded eyes and George shivered, his heart hammering away in his chest at a rate that definitely wasn't healthy, "You really want to?"

"I do," George nodded but bit his lip, "But um, still not all the way.....not in a forest at least."

"Now way, our first full time should be special," Dream smiled and gave him a peck on the lips. One peck turned into two which turned into three and soon they were inseparable.

George marveled at how easy it was to get lost in whatever he was doing or thinking when kissing Dream. He didn't even notice it when Dream carried him over to a tree and pressed him against it. It wasn't until his back hit the tree and Dream removed the last inch of space between them that he realized it.

Dream parted from George's lips and George didn't miss the way Dream's eyes were lively, practically sparkling. Inwardly it was amusing, "I wanna try something and it wouldn't be going all the way. Can I?"

George bit his lip, flushing, "Um, o-okay, sure..."

"You can tell me anytime you wanna stop or pause. I won't get upset," Dream told him seriously and George smiled in appreciation, feeling a bit better. Dream did always consider him to an absurd amount, "I wanna make you feel good."

"*Dream...*" George whined, feeling utterly embarrassed and hiding his face in Dream's shoulder. How can he talk like that without any sort of restraint? Did he not get embarrassed? Like what the hell? And he was only considering George, "W-Will it make you feel good too?"

"Fuck yeah," Dream replied, his voice steadily becoming lower and George felt a familiar hotness rush all over. Oh God... "Remember to tell me if you don't like anything."

"I will, I promise," George assured, retreating from Dream's shoulders to look him in the eyes. He

almost regretted that when he was greeted with Dream's already ruined expression. His cheeks were red and he was breathing a little harder now. George just didn't notice how much he was already affected until now.

(SMUT WILL START BEGINNING HERE)

Dream smiled, rubbing a hand on George's cheek lovingly and George was a bit taken back by the sweet gesture before he smiled back softly and Dream leaned in to kiss him again. George let Dream take the reigns on kissing, it just felt right to do so.

As Dream's tongue wandered around, practically memorizing every crevice of his mouth, Dream's hands moved from George's thighs. He slowly traced them over George's hips and up his sides. George shivered at the light touch, feeling goosebumps spread across his skin.

Dream's lips were just as warm and soft as usual. George hummed contentedly as Dream continued to lavish attention on his lips, pulling back only when they needed a second to breathe. George squirmed when Dream traced his hands back down his sides to his thighs again.

To his surprise, Dream's fingers also traced the crease of skin where thigh met hips. His breath hitched into a strong gasp when Dream ghosted his fingers over the growing tent in his jeans. The almost touch made George push his hips up a little and Dream smiled against George's lips.

"You're so beautiful baby," Dream whispered and George just burned; his face, his emotions, they were all on fire. George opened his eyes -when did he even close them? Dream's amber-green eyes were still darkened with arousal but he was looking at George like he was the *whole world* and George felt a lump in his throat.

How had he not wanted to be as close as physically possible to Dream before? How could he let Dream think for a second that he didn't want him in every way possible? Tears bloomed in George's eyes and Dream's eyes began to widen with worry. That just wouldn't do. George gave him a watery smile, "Weren't you supposed to be making me feel good?"

Shock graced Dream's face for merely a second at the soft but bratty words and he smirked, showing off sharp canines that never failed to turn George on, "Oh don't worry baby, I will."

His heart jumped slightly when Dream released him quickly but then his mouth fell open stupidly when Dream knelt in front of him and began to reach for George's zipper. Oh fuck, wait-

George didn't have time to process before Dream was unzipping and pushing both his underwear and jeans down. George's cock sprung up against his stomach and George whined in embarrassment, hiding his red face with his hands despite the fact that Dream's already seen him before.

Dream chuckled and George whimpered at the breath he felt against his erection. Then his eyes

flew open when he realized what Dream meant to do. His wide eyes met Dream's gaze as Dream reached hand to lightly, teasingly, stroke his cock.

"Can I?" Dream asked not for the first time. He was searching George's face for any hesitation. George's heart was hammering in his chest again.

"Y-Yes," George nodded, somehow feeling himself heat up more, his legs already shaking with Dream doing nothing more than rubbing him.

Dream grinned toothily at him before pressing a kiss on the head of his cock, making George gasp and then jerk his hips a little in surprise when he felt Dream kitten-lick the tip. Tingles of pleasure shot up George from his groin to his lower abdomen. Briefly George wondered how this was going to make Dream feel good too.

His mind halted when Dream stopped stroking him a moment to give a long slow lick up his entire length. George bit back a moan and accidentally met Dream's eyes again. Dream was staring right at his face, watching him. George hid his face behind his hands, "D-Don't stare at me like that."

The steady warmth of pleasure disappeared and he barely suppressed a whine. Dream chuckled, "No can do. You're too pretty not to stare at. I wanna see everything."

George was too flustered to respond to that and his breath stuttered when Dream began licking his cock again, teasing him. Then he outright gasped when Dream opened his mouth and took the head of his cock into his mouth.

The warmth he felt around his cock made him whimper, clenching his teeth to keep himself from moaning obscenely loud at the sparks of increasing pleasure. His knees buckled and if it weren't for Dream pressing against him, he might have fallen.

Dream pressed his face down further and George couldn't help the moan that escaped his lips then, his hands flying to Dream's blonde hair before he even registered the action. Dream's throat constricted around George's erection and Dream paused, pulling back when he gagged.

"D-Dream?" George breathed out heavily, looking down in concern. Dream flicked his eyes up at him again. Dream didn't look hurt, so that's good.

"Trying to see how much I can do," Dream suddenly smirked and George blinked at him, "This is a bit harder than I imagined it would be."

It was so easy to forget that Dream was experiencing certain firsts along with George. His heart melted again and he smiled shyly at Dream, "Don't do too much, idiot."

Dream just huffed at him and then cleared his throat before opening his mouth again, engulfing George's cock. George's breath stuttered and his eyes fluttered before closing. He hummed at the steady pleasure he felt. He should really do this for Dream too.

"Ah fuck!" George gasped when Dream hesitated for a second before deepthroating him again, going slow and methodical compared to the first time. George whimpered and gripped Dream's hair, accidentally pulling on it once or twice.

Dream moaned around his cock and George jolted, moans spilling from his lips at an embarrassing rate. A familiar pressure was quickly building and George frantically tapped Dream's head, "D-Dre-*mfphh*, Dream, I-I'm about to-

He seemed to understand because he pulled almost all the way off George's cock and used one of his hands to jerk him off into his mouth. Tears pricked George's eyes as the pleasure came to a boiling point and he came into Dream's mouth with a muffled groan, his legs almost quaking.

Dream continued to stroke him through it and George thought he was gonna die of embarrassment when Dream swallowed and looked up at him. George untangled his hands from Dream's hair to hide his face yet again, suddenly unable to look at Dream. He just....he *swallowed* it?!

"Georgie~! Why are you hiding from me?" Dream laughed and George felt himself blush more at the hoarseness in his voice now, "You're so shy."

"How can you not be?! You just-" George exclaimed, uncovering his face to glare at Dream, who quirked a brow with a smirk still on his face. George looked away at the ground immediately, "How are you so bold? I don't get it."

"Cause it's you. If it wasn't you I'd probably die of embarrassment," Dream chuckled, "I don't know, I don't get too embarrassed because you do? Maybe..."

George glanced at him from the corner of his eye. Well, George was easily embarrassed, that was true. Maybe Dream got confidence from that somehow? Who knows how it worked. George noticed the still ever present tent in Dream's pants and looked at him, "Um, do you want me to...um....reciprocate?"

Dream blushed a little and shifted, "Uh, well you um...don't have to if you don't want to."

George smiled at his sudden demeanor despite claiming to not get embarrassed literally two seconds ago. He giggled before tugging his underwear and pants back on. Dream watched him as he squatted in front of him where Dream was kneeling still.

"I-I might not last long," Dream admitted, biting his lip as his face reddened even more. George almost groaned at the expression alone. Dream was gorgeous all flushed like that and biting his lip.

"Then m-maybe just my hand? I can try the mouth thing another time," George offered hesitantly and Dream nodded, smiling a little.

"If you're comfortable," Dream added and George smiled back at him, scooting closer to him to lean into his space.

"Yeah I am and I want to make you feel as good as you made me feel," George whispered against his lips and Dream groaned, grabbing him by the arms and pulling him into a heated kiss.

George kissed Dream just as fervently, tracing a finger around Dream's cheek, down his neck and chest, across his belly before reaching his zipper. Dream squirmed when George slowly unzipped his pants. George grinned against Dream's lips.

"Is it okay?" He asked because if Dream's taught him anything, it's that constant consent is *important*. Dream smiled like he had heard his thoughts.

"Fuck yeah. I'll be so sad if you stop," He said jokingly and George laughed, reaching to pulling Dream's underwear down enough to access his cock. Dream sat up on his knees to help George and then sighed in relief when George started stroking his cock, "You're so good George."

George smirked, cocking a brow, "I just started though?"

Dream wheezed, shoving his head into George's shoulders, "S-Shut up!"

George laughed softly, twisting his wrist a little on the upstroke and taking in Dream's stuttered breath with reverence. No wonder Dream liked to hear George so much. The noises Dream could make were addicting.

He rubbed his thumb over the head of Dream's cock and felt a heat wave wash over him when Dream moaned loudly, his face still in George's shoulder so the sound was close to his ear. George gulped, his own sensitive cock twitching at the sounds he was making.

Just like Dream said, it didn't take long for him to finish. Dream was panting and his fingers almost digging into George's arms. A few more pumps of his hand and a couple of more twists of the wrist and Dream was cumming, long moans falling from his mouth, sounding almost muffled from his face still being in George's shoulder.

George let Dream cling to him through it, rubbing a hand gently through Dream's hair. Dream caught his breath and sighed contently, "That felt so fucking good."

"I could tell," George teased lightly and Dream burst out laughing, leaning his head back from

George's shoulder. Dream's eyes were light and almost sparkling again, "I guess you really needed this."

Dream rolled his eyes, looking embarrassed again, "Don't make fun of me for being horny for you, Georgie."

"Fine," George grinned, feeling like a whole weight was off his chest.

Dream glanced at him as he fixed his pants, "We should probably head back soon. The others probably already think something's up."

George's eyes widened as he thought about that, "Do you think they, uh, know we...."

"Maybe," Dream shrugged before pursing his lips, "Sapnap probably will know immediately."

"*Ugh!*" George groaned, hiding his face as he blushed. He could already imagine the teasing and wasn't sure how he was gonna handle that. Dream bumped his shoulder into his.

"It'll be alright," Dream laughed lightly, "I won't let them bully us too much."

George sighed heavily into his hands, "Right....no avoiding it. Let's go back then."

"Wait, where's my mask?" Dream questioned and they both looked around until George spotted the mask on the ground close to them, remembering the way Dream tossed it away, "Oh right."

"You just tossed it so carelessly," George teased and Dream glared at him without heat, making George laugh. Teasing Dream was so fun!

"You aren't gonna let me live this down are you?" Dream groaned and George giggled.

"Not when you confessed to being so horny for me you almost tripped and fell on your face," George remarked with a savage grin and Dream sighed, blushing a little.

"Yeah, yeah...." Dream muttered and George playfully bumped him with his hip as they started back to camp.

"Don't worry, I'll only tease you about it when it's just us," George smiled and Dream looked at him before grinning, slipping the mask back on his face.

"I can live with that."

Chapter End Notes

So how was it guys? You know I could use any encouraging words but especially feedback. I don't often post smut, so any advice is good! Am I too descriptive or not descriptive enough? I'm an emotional writer so that shows through my writing and that might not be for everyone!

Next chapter will be more action filled as they begin the actual mission against the pillagers! 😊

And I'll do my very best to work on it so that it doesn't take two months this time!



Chapter 33

Chapter Summary

The day of the mission arrives. Dream observes how nothing goes according to their carefully put together plan.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! I'm back! Hope you're all doing okay! I know I am! I'm still trying to find time to write and I think part of the problem is that I'm trying to write long chapters. I might have to shorten them a bit if I want to update more often! We'll see how it goes.

Anyways, thanks to everyone who commented last chapter and to those who encouraged me about my stress on my workload! H0N3YZ_BUNZ, Kasiwi, Phatphart, and Berspn, you guys were especially helpful last chapter, so thank you!!

Remember to take care of yourselves! I love this community so much!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dream felt completely relaxed for the first time in a while. He glanced at George again. George looked increasingly more wary and embarrassed the closer they got back to camp. Dream knew it was because he was embarrassed about the way he dragged Dream out of camp. At worst Sapnap would tease them, but he *always* did that.

Dream rubbed his thumb along the knuckles of George's hand that he was holding. George's brow smoothed a little and he flicked his brown eyes up at him. Dream smiled, squeezing his hand lightly. It seemed to work on getting George to relax because George smiled a little in return.

"You know, Sapnap and I are gonna have a little competition..." Dream trailed off, trying to think of something to say. George rose an eyebrow.

"Of course you are," He laughed, rolling his eyes, "What's it about this time?"

Dream grinned at him, "Well, we're gonna compete to see how many pillagers we take down."

"Oh?" George hummed, frowning again. Something conflicted ran across his gaze before settling on acceptance. Dream wondered what was going on through his head, "I'm not surprised honestly. W-When you say that though...do you mean you'll compete on how many you kill?"

"Not really, though we will probably have to do that. It's not like the pillagers are just gonna give up and walk away," Dream replied, carefully watching George's expression. George valued life a lot and that only increased when he became a cleric-in-training. It's not like Dream *didn't* value peoples' lives...but when those people were people like the pillagers? He's less inclined to give a shit. Maybe that means there's something wrong with him.

"I know," George sighed and glanced at Dream again, "I just hate that you have to do that."

Dream blinked, but something in his heart softened. George was just concerned about him, like he always was. A blinding grin took over Dream's face, "It's alright, George! You don't have to worry about me."

George shook his head, huffing out a laugh, "Pretty sure that's what a boyfriend is supposed to do, but what do I know?"

"You know a lot," Dream snickered and squeezed George's hand again when they came close enough back to camp to hear the murmurs of their friends. George tensed, "Don't worry. Even if they say anything, who *cares* what they think?"

"We both do," George grunted and Dream didn't say anything. It doesn't bother him if his friends knew he had sex with George, but he can't lie and say he doesn't care what they think of him in general. George was thinking too much about it though.

"It'll be alright," Dream shrugged, dragging George along with him as they finally came into view of the camp. Sapnap was in the same spot he was when they left, like he was keeping a watch out for them. Typical Sapnap.

Sapnap noticed them almost immediately, standing from where he was sitting against a tree with a grin on his face, "You're back!"

His commotion caused everyone else to look up from what they were doing. George stiffened but Dream was a bit too used to having so many eyes on him. He smiled, "Yup!"

"Settled your disagreements then, mate?" Phil asked kindly, his eyes on their intertwined hands.

"Sure," Dream nodded, trying to be careful about what he said. He knew George was embarrassed about them finding out anything personal about their relationship.

"What was up with you Gogy?" Tommy asked loudly, raising a brow, "I don't think I've ever seen you that pissed off!"

"Same," Skeppy agreed, staring at the pair intently. Dream glanced at George.

"Well, I, uh, I thought Dream was flat out ignoring me," George stuttered and Dream squeezed his hand, "And that wasn't gonna fly."

Wilbur and a few others laughed, "So you dragged him away to yell at him?"

"Yeah George, is that why you dragged him away?" Sapnap questioned with a shit-eating grin. Dream withheld a sigh as George's hands clenched around his own. George was probably already plotting to kill Sapnap. Those two sure did have a weird love-hate friendship going on, not that Dream was complaining.

"Yes," George hissed and Sapnap simply laughed at him, "I wasn't about to start screaming at him while you all were forced to listen."

"Good call," Techno snorted, looking somewhat amused and relieved in a way that made Dream laugh at him.

"Yeah but that would have been entertaining," Tubbo grinned as Ranboo rose an eyebrow down at him. Tommy nodded in agreement. Schlatt huffed in what suspiciously sounded like a laugh or a poorly concealed cough.

"Well *some* things are meant to be kept private. I'm not about shout my relationship troubles to the world," George grumbled and Puffy chuckled from where she was helping Purpled make more arrows from stones.

"That's true. So do you guys want to help us make some arrows?" Puffy asked with a little smile, obviously trying to change the subject. George jumped on it like he was jumping for a raft in the middle of the ocean. Dream couldn't help but laugh again, wheezing with it.

Things settled down after that and thankfully Sapnap didn't make too many more comments out loud. He seemed too busy watching Dream after all, which Dream found a little odd but he rolled with it, spending time helping Sapnap sharpen their personal swords. They'd already been sharpened before but it was better than doing nothing.

He seemed to relax a little bit after that but Dream noted that sometimes Sapnap stared off into space like he was lost in thoughts. That wasn't completely out of character, but it was weird enough that Dream wondered if he should ask about it.

So Dream waited until after the camp started calming down for the night. The kids were the first to fall asleep, being carried into their tents individually by Phil while Puffy let Purpled sleep curled up right next to her with a fond expression on her face.

George joined Dream and Sapnap by then and kept shooting thoughtful looks in Sapnap's direction so it seemed Dream wasn't the only one who noticed his off behavior. Dream decided to finally speak up once some of the others bid them goodnight and went into their tents.

Technoblade gave them a weird look as he collected a sleeping Wilbur and carried him off into the tent they shared right by Phil's. Dream just shrugged, knowing Techno wasn't the prying type. Once he was out of view he turned to Sapnap and George, "Hey Sapnap?"

"Hmmm?" Sapnap responded as he shoved another sword aside, intently focused as he grabbed another one. When Dream didn't immediately respond he continued, "What Dream?"

"You alright?" Dream asked, exchanging a look with George. George was still frowning at Sapnap.

"Yeah, why?" Sapnap looked confused that he'd asked. Dream hesitated.

"You're being spacey....and you only do that when something's weighing on your mind," Dream prompted seriously and Sapnap blinked a couple of times, coming out of another daze to look at him, slightly surprised.

"Oh...." Sapnap trailed off, looking from Dream to George, who was still frowning, "Oh, yeah....forgot you know me about as well as I know myself."

Dream laughed easily, lighthearted, "Yeah, of course I do. We're like brothers."

Sapnap sucked in a breath and smiled shakily, his amber eyes shining, "Yeah, we are."

George looked a tad awkward for a second before he also smiled at Sapnap and scooted closer, "So, um, what's wrong then?"

Sapnap seemed to find George's awkwardness about as endearing as Dream did, "Nothing's really wrong I'm just.....I'm just a bit worried I guess."

"Worried?" Dream tilted his head, "About the mission?"

Sapnap nodded, staring down at the ground, "About the possibilities..."

"I'm worried too," George huffed and tried to smile, "But you assured me of how powerful we all were together, right?"

"Yeah..." Sapnap trailed off, flicking his gaze at George, "We *are*."

"Then why are you worried?" Dream asked softly. He felt a growing sense of determination. He already knew he wasn't gonna let anything happen to Sapnap and George.

"Well you know...nothing's *guaranteed*," Sapnap shrugged, clearing his throat heavily, "What if something happens and I.....we get captured again?"

Dream straightened at the same time George did, glancing at each other. George looked just as worried, "You're worried about being captured again?"

"Aren't you?" Sapnap snapped and then looked a bit guilty, "Sorry..."

"No it's okay," George said lightly, crossing his arms, "I didn't really think too much about that to be honest. I've...I've been more worried about someone being killed."

Dream frowned sadly at the barely concealed shiver that went through George and remembered some of the nightmares he knew his boyfriend had about the pillagers.

"Yeah, there's that too," Sapnap began with a pinched expression, "It's just..."

He didn't need to explain, at least not to *Dream*. Sapnap was terrified of losing his regained freedom, to be subject to the whims of savages again where he had little control over his life. Sapnap was terrified to be captured again; to the point where it seemed he'd preferred to be killed than that.

A growing rage filled Dream at the reminder of his best friend's pain. Sapnap had endured *so* much because of these assholes. Those savages aren't going to know what's hit them when Dream arrived.

George went quiet and Dream's not sure if that's because he was beginning to truly understand too or if he was just working through his thoughts. Regardless, Dream reached out and touched Sapnap's shoulder.

"We're going to beat them Sapnap," Dream promised and something in his tone made Sapnap and George straighten, "Then they won't lay another hand on anyone again."

Sapnap smiled. It was tiny compared to a true Sapnap smile but it was there and it eased Dream's worries a little. Dream grinned back. George just huffed at them but smiled too, "Well no one will be doing that if we don't get some rest!"

Dream watched Sapnap tense a little bit again and spoke quickly, "Why don't you sleep with us, Sapnap?"

Sapnap and George looked at him, startled, before Sapnap burst out laughing, relaxing completely, "I'm not into threesomes, Dream, but thanks for the offer."

Dream let out a startled little wheeze, his face flushing and for once George started laughing instead of getting all annoyed, "What the *hell* Sapnap?! You know what he meant!"

"I know," Sapnap laughed before shrugging, "Couldn't help myself."

George rolled his eyes, "Well? Do you want to sleep in our tent or not?"

"Sure..." Sapnap hesitated but then his face smoothed out, "Thanks."

"You're welcome," Dream answered once he was done wheezing out laughter, "As long as you don't keep us up with your inappropriate comments."

"No promises," Sapnap snickered and George sighed, pinching his nose. Dream just laughed again, fondness deep in his heart.

They all sleep soundly that night, despite thinking it'd be impossible to do so. Dream's up before them and lets himself drink in the affection he feels for the two that are cuddled up to his sides with him in the middle.

It isn't until he hears everyone else beginning to wake and get productive that he shakes the two awake to get prepared for the day. They're quiet but that doesn't bother Dream this time because *he's* quiet as well. A certain wariness and determination filling his very bones.

Today was the day. They were beginning their plan today. It was the start of the downfall for the pillagers, at least.

And Dream felt so satisfied by that, he could almost feel the smirking on his face. He was glad most of his expression was hidden by his mask. He could barely control the darkness he knew was there.

Though George and Sapnap were quiet, they looked just as determined as Dream, tugging on their armor and setting up their weapons in silence. When Puffy announced breakfast was ready, they both stuck close to Dream.

Everyone was lively at breakfast. Everyone but Schlatt, Dream, Sapnap, George, Philza, and Technoblade. Wilbur and Skeppy both seemed to make it their mission to keep the atmosphere light. Of course, none of the kids seemed bothered by anything except maybe a dazed Ranboo.

They had just begun clearing their camp of breakfast when Techno finally spoke up, "Everyone

remembers the plan?"

"For God's sake, *yes*!" Wilbur cried and Puffy's mouth quirked when Tommy laughed loudly, "We're just spying today. No fighting, no chaos, we get it."

Techno didn't look amused. His lips tightened as he stared at Wilbur. Phil decided to speak up then, but his eyes were on Ranboo, "Remember the groups?"

"Yes. I-I looked at my new journal," Ranboo nodded, blushing lightly at all the attention, "I'm with George, Purpled, Tommy and Tubbo."

"Yup!" Tubbo nodded and Ranboo relaxed a little, his tail flicking behind him.

"We should finish cleaning up and then get ready then," Techno grumbled, tearing his eyes away from Wilbur to address everyone.

"Aye, aye!" Skeppy saluted, making Dream feel amused. At least Skeppy seemed to still be doing okay. That was one load off. Dream didn't want to know what Bad would do if Skeppy didn't come back okay.

They broke off and finished clearing the camp. Dream helped tie the horses away and out of immediate sight. It took a little over an hour, but by the time they were done, there wasn't any evidence that they camped there.

"Let's get into our groups and go over the area we're meant to cover," Phil suggested with a smile as he looked over at everyone. His smile tightened when he looked at Schlatt, "I want to talk to you for a second too, mate, before we leave."

Schlatt blinked but didn't give anything away, "Alright, one second."

Dream watched curiously as Schlatt stepped over to Tubbo, interrupting a conversation he was having with Tommy and Ranboo to hand him what looked like a bee-shaped pin. Tubbo blinked a few times in awe, "I meant to give this to you when I returned for my visit, but well....all *this* happened. Have it kiddo."

"Thanks..." Tubbo said quietly, running his fingers over it before making a show of pinning it to his shirt under his iron armor, "I love it."

"Good," Schlatt nodded, though he looked awkward. A grin split Tommy's face, like he wanted to say something about that but Phil cleared his throat and Schlatt sighed, "Go crazy, kid."

Tubbo grinned manically, "I will!"

"*Why* would you say that?" George groaned, surprising Dream for a moment, "How am I supposed to watch after them if they're going crazy?"

"Now you know how we feel on a daily," Wilbur winced, his eyes full of sympathy while Tubbo and Tommy just laughed. Techno rolled his eyes.

"Can we just get this show on the road already?" Sapnap asked, his fingers clenching and unclenching repeatedly, but his eyes shone in a type of excitement only Dream and Techno could understand. Maybe Phil too, considering the way he looked at Sapnap.

"Sure, just remember to observe everything and keep yourselves hidden," Techno coached and Wilbur groaned again. Purpled chuckled at him.

"Will do," Puffy nodded seriously, "Keep up with update on the device all of you or I will come *find* you."

Dream shuddered, knowing she was one hundred percent not joking. Phil's mouth quirked into a smile at Tommy's face falling seriously. That seemed to set things in motion though.

Dream turned, giving George and Sapnap a quick squeeze of a hug, muttering to them, "Don't you dare get hurt."

"You too," Sapnap huffed, amused.

"I'll kill you both if I have to fix you up," George said sourly and they all shared a laugh before departing. Dream hated the feeling like he was leaving them behind but quickly steeled himself and joined Techno.

"Ready?" Techno questioned in that monotone of his and Dream nodded stiffly. He followed Techno along the path they memorized and forced himself not to look behind him at the people he loved, the people that were slowly becoming a part of his family. Well, except Schlatt.

Dream kept an eye out for anything unusual, falling back into a skillset that came naturally to him. His eyes mapped out escape routes, possible locations to set up traps, and most of all, he kept his ears out for any strange noises or lack thereof.

Techno seemed to be doing the same thing, his eyes focused with a startling clearness. They seemed to vibe off each other and Dream felt pleased that Techno appeared to trust him enough to have his back. They didn't even need words to communicate what they should be doing.

It took a few minutes, but as expected, they came across the top of a hill that lead to a small little cliff. It was hidden with numerous bushes and trees. Dream got his first look at the so-called main pillager outpost.

It was huge; so much so that Dream almost gasped out loud when he caught sight of it. Techno stiffened for a moment before he was a mask of calm again. The outpost was surrounded by a cobblestone brick wall and barbed wire curling on the outside of it. There were two archways leading in and out.

There appeared to be numerous tents and little workshops surrounding a tallish tower made from various stones and spruce wood. It was halfway into a desert biome and the pillagers seemed to set up a little oasis pool and fences with livestock in the desert side.

"Two exits," Techno commented and Dream nodded along, never taking his eyes off the outpost. Now that he looked harder, he could see the pillagers out working and carrying various weapons. A few seemed to be guarding the fortress on the outside of the doors. There were several making rounds on top of the cobblestone brick walls, careful of the barbed wiring outside of it, "I don't see any prisoners outside."

"They'd have to be kept in the tower," Dream added and Techno grunted, his lips flattening in a line, "From this angle I can't see what they have on the other side."

"And the patrols don't seem to actually *leave* the outpost," Techno muttered, his eyes narrowing at the top of the walls, "At least not from what I see."

"Let's assume they still do that," Dream answered cautiously and Techno nodded, looking at Dream with a calculative eye, "What?"

"Nothing," Techno looked away and Dream rose an eyebrow, "I see gold and iron armor mostly, same with swords."

"Maybe higher rankings have better armor?" Dream suggested, his eyebrows furrowing. Surely they'd have better equipment if they thought a group would be coming.

"Something feels off," Techno frowned and Dream nodded, "If they really thought we were coming, then why don't they push out patrols? Why don't they have better gear?"

Dream felt something unsettling in his gut as he glanced at the communicator in Techno's hands. Techno caught him looking and looked at the device himself. He seemed a little less tense, "The others have reached their locations, nothing is happening so far."

"So no one has been caught," Dream deflated with relief.

"Yet," Techno growled darkly and Dream glanced at him again, "Something's not right and I'll find out what."

Dream said nothing and returned to staring down at the outpost, watching the movements of the pillagers from here.

It was almost an hour of mindless observations when they saw it. A large person steps out of the tower with several other pillagers. This person was draped in shimmery diamond armor. Techno sucked in a breath, leaning closer to look.

He seemed to be barking out orders, Dream noted. Several pillagers began doing what looked like practice drills. Dream froze when one of the pillagers fell when doing a simple routine of dodging and the diamond pillager backhanded him pretty hard. A lot of pillagers cowered away from the diamond pillager.

Techno and Dream said nothing as they continued to stare. Dream felt something uncomfortable in his chest as they continued to watch the diamond pillager's almost cruel actions. They'd been watching for all of six minutes and it was already clear to Dream that this person had no care for his fellow pillagers. Dream didn't allow himself to feel sympathy. At the end of the day, they still chose to be cruel themselves.

Dream was so into observing that he almost jumped when something snapped beside him. Dream whirled his head around to Techno and almost froze. Techno looked absolutely darkened with rage, his gaze zeroed in on the diamond pillager. His fingers were curled into the dirt and he had snapped some sticks in his grasp.

"Techno?" Dream whispered, his heart picking up speed a bit. The last time he'd seen Techno this enraged was when Phil was hurt. Did he notice something Dream hadn't?

Techno stiffened but didn't tear his eyes away from the diamond pillager's form. His mouth twisted and his eyes remained dark, "I hate tyrants; dictators like this that are cruel to the weak just because they have more power. They're the *worst* kinds of people."

Dream blinked. Where did this come from? Techno didn't spare Dream a glance, "Most of the times they are cowards themselves and that's why they're so cruel to others. I won't hesitate to get rid of governments or any groups that are led by such people."

"Yeah..?" Dream said mindlessly, still kind of lost and wondering where he was going with this. Then he thought of something, "But you're okay with Eret...?"

Techno finally looked at him with dark eyes, "Eret's fine. They're not tyrannical and they know if they become that way that I won't *hesitate* to kill them. I've done it before to others."

Dream's eyes widened but he understood. He hadn't realized Techno felt that strongly about it. He's so reclusive and quiet and monotone. This was the most passionate Dream's seen him, "Then we'll leave nothing left of this place. We'll burn it to the ground."

This seemed to be the right response because Techno's mouth quirked into a maniacal little smirk. Dream almost shuddered if he didn't understand where he was coming from. He remembered seeing this expression on Wilbur's and even *Tommy's* face. Phil was the same. Did Phil just have soft spots for crazy kids? Dream almost snorted.

"Let's keep observing for now," Techno grunted, looking away again. Dream did the same quietly, running over Techno's words in his head.

They observed things for another hour but nothing immediately stood out. Dream was becoming nervous, glancing at the communicator in Techno's hands. Techno kept glancing at it too, but no one was reaching out for help, so that was something.

"We should go back and compare observations with the others," Techno grumbled and Dream nodded almost eagerly. He really wanted to just check that nothing happened to George or Sapnap.

Dream and Techno were more than halfway back when Dream noticed something odd. The forest around them was much too quiet. There were no sounds of birds or critters scurrying about in the leaves. Goosebumps broke out on Dream's arms.

"Something's not right," Techno commented, glancing up at the trees.

"I think so too," Dream conceded as he frowned, searching for any evidence that there was someone else out in the woods with them, "Have the others messaged anything?"

"Only good things so far on their end," Techno reported after giving the device a spare glance, "We should loop around before going all the way back just in case som-"

Something snaps in the distance, almost sounding deliberate in a way and Dream shoots all the way up in a straightened stance, bringing his shield and diamond axe out immediately. Techno is fatally calm beside him, a diamond sword gleaming ominously at his side.

Several pillagers step into view, armed to the teeth with iron weapons and armor. One of them, who has gold armor, sneered, "Oh, I *knew* I saw something suspicious nearby earlier. Alert the Master that they're finally here!"

That *cannot* happen. Not so soon. Dream moved before thinking, bringing his arm back and launching his axe across the way. He doesn't wince when he hits his target. The pillager that had already begun to move back to the outpost cried out as the axe pierced his spine and he flopped to

the ground. He was unmoving and a startlingly big pool of blood was seeping out of him.

Techno made some sort of off noise as the pillagers exploded in a flurry of movement to attack them. Dream realized that he threw his main weapon, but they were dumb if they thought they could defeat him regardless.

Dream dodged a blow meant for him and swiftly disarmed his opponent. A familiar urge welled in his chest and he took the pillagers iron sword before cutting his throat with it. He moved on to the next opponent just as quickly to see that Techno had already taken care of two out of the five remaining, blood covering his armor in a way that made Dream grimace in disgust.

It didn't seem to bother Techno, though, as he moved fluidly to attack and kill all the pillagers with a beauty that made Dream feel awed. He quickly spun out of the way when his own opponent yelled in rage and tried to cut him down. He kicked him to the ground and stabbed into his chest with no remorse.

"I don't know whether to be impressed that you used your main weapon like that or to think you're an idiot," Techno snorted and Dream couldn't help but smile at his amusement despite the fact that they just killed seven people and Techno was quite literally covered in blood.

Techno grabbed Dream's axe from the body and handed it to him. Dream grimaced and flicked some of the blood off as Techno looked amused, "How can you stand all that blood on you?"

"It's just *blood*. Nothing you can't wash off," Techno shrugged nonchalantly and Dream rose an eyebrow but didn't have time to comment before the communication device began going off, sounding much like a pinging alarm.

Techno took one look at it before snarling and Dream felt his face pale, "We need to go!"

"What is it?!" Dream demanded but immediately began to race beside Techno as they headed to where Dream knew Phil's group was with Sapnap's group nearby.

"Phil's calling for help. Sapnap's messaged too. They're fighting much like we were," Techno explained in a threatening rumble, his face curling into a snarl again. Dream almost stumbled mid-run, his heart stopped. *No*.

"They were discovered?" Dream asked in horror and Techno scowled.

"Seems like it but we didn't see any evidence that they had traps or scouts in the woods so I don't know how they could of known the moment we arrived," Techno commented and Dream swallowed heavily, ice in his veins.

"No message from George's group?" Dream questioned quietly, hoping for something positive. Techno's face twitched like it almost fell completely and Dream knew who he was worried for.

"No."

Dream ground his teeth in anger, pulling himself together as they ran as quickly as they could. As soon as they were close enough, Dream heard the telltale signs of fighting.

He leapt out of the way of one of the trees and tried not to freeze at the sight before him. Village warriors were fighting against several pillagers, way more than had snuck up on Techno and Dream. There were some further away, behind the line of pillagers fighting, shooting arrows into the sky.

Techno let out a enraged howl and when he glanced up he realized why. Phil was trying to maneuver out of the way of the arrows aimed at him with his elytra but it was almost like the pillagers had been *prepared* for him.

Techno dashed forward at once and Dream shook himself out of it to join. As he engaged the pillagers, who were more than surprised at their arrival, he kept a look out. He realized with a jolt of fear that Wilbur was no where in sight but Schlatt was fighting, a cut across his collarbone.

"Thank God, mate!" Phil called from the sky and Dream struggled against two pillagers that were trying to gain the upper hand with him, "We've clearly lost our element of surprise."

"*Clearly!*" Techno called back, completely monotone, "Wilbur?"

"Got split off from us. I got into the air to go after him but...." Phil's speech tampered off as he yelped and an arrow scratched his arm, "Those annoying little shits...."

Techno practically mowed down the enemy then, moving to the archers just as a village warrior helped Dream out with his own opponent. Dream heard their cries for mercy cut off abruptly and ignored it, "Where's Sapnap?"

"Haven't met up yet. I saw his message but this all happened," Phil explained as he finally landed on the ground with a wince, "They clearly know we're here now."

"So much for our plan of waiting and watching," Schlatt huffed out a laugh but Dream glared over at him. When he noticed Schlatt straightened, "What?"

"They knew when we arrived. Did you get word to them?" Dream asked calmly, feeling a deadly amount of anger rise and settle in his chest. Techno whirled around from his last kill to pin Schlatt with a stare. Phil looked on blankly.

"No! *Hell* no!" Schlatt growled out, looking frustrated, "Look, why the *fuck* would I do that when I'm with you all and I knew I could be found out!? I'm not a moron! I wouldn't put the kids in danger either!"

At the mention of them Dream's face fell. A glance told him that Phil's did as well and he whipped his com out quickly, "I haven't gotten a word from George. I don't know if they were discovered."

Techno looked eerily calm, "First let's find Sapnap's group since they're in the middle of ours and George's group. They're under attack too."

"And Wilbur?" Phil asked quietly, already scanning the woods.

"We'll find him eventually," Techno scowled and that was that. Dream sent Schlatt a menacing look that he didn't react to and clenched one hand into a fist.

Sapnap and George better be alright after all this or Dream will-

An explosion goes off in the distance and rattles the ground. Dream almost stumbled at the force of it. Phil inhaled sharply and Techno froze. That could only come from two people. Wilbur or Tubbo. But Wilbur was adamant about the fact that he gave Tubbo small scale explosives and this one sounded....big.

"What the fuck?" Schlatt cursed, his eyes going wide.

"*Tech....*" Phil muttered, still shocked and Techno nodded like he knew what Phil meant anyway. Dream tried and failed to reign in his panic.

Nothing was going the way it should.

As if to mock him, the com went off again. Techno and Phil scrambled to look but then they went quiet. Dream immediately went to Phil's side since he was the closest and looked at the screen, his heart hammering.

A frantic message awaited him.

George: Things went to shit. We're close to the base and Wilbur's explosive set the rest of them into action. We're going in to look for prisoners. Be aware that most of them are coming for you all now.

"They're using the distraction as an opportunity," Techno said blankly though his expression turned

thoughtful.

"Techno," Phil breathed, looking panicked, "The explosion worked as a diversion but they're....they're going *there*. To *Wilbur*."

Techno's face darkened, "I know. And we're going."

"What about Sapnap's group?" Dream asked hesitantly, emotionally torn and still in shock. Everything was happening way too quickly and out of plan for him to comprehend.

"They'll catch up. We'll keep messaging them to see if they need help and to tell them where we're going," Schlatt added in and all three turned to him with wide eyes. He looked oddly worried, "Let's go find Wilbur first. He's the one currently on his own."

Phil looked at Schlatt in shock for a moment longer before he steeled, "Schlatt's right."

"Let's go," Techno nodded, turning to look at the village warriors who stood by quietly. They caught his stare and nodded along as if they didn't need words for an order. Dream felt mystified by that but decided not to dwell on it.

There were a few more explosions before they finally found Wilbur. Dream sucked in a breath in both horror and awe at what he saw when they arrived. Wilbur was holding his own against so many, but barely. It was clear he was using his explosives to keep them away from him. The high-end explosions killed many of the pillagers so far.

Blood and guts and bodies were piled around the area near Wilbur and on the boy himself. Wilbur seemed unaffected by the gore, his dark gaze merely pinned on his enemies and Dream felt a shudder go through him.

"Wil!" Phil cried, nearly flying to the boy and Wilbur jumped, narrowly missing an arrow shot at him. With a familiar snarl, Technoblade leapt forward and Dream followed, silent but just as deadly. He tilted his head for good measure and felt a sense of dark satisfaction when many of the pillagers backed up, looking frightened and shocked.

"You seem....good," Schlatt winced awkwardly and Wilbur laughed, letting Phil scan him over once before they turned to look at the fight.

"I got your message and Sapnap's and figured I should start exploding shit now," Wilbur shrugged and Dream felt amused by his nonchalance, dodging a sword swing and swiftly killing the pillager in front of him. Many of the others looked ready to retreat already, "I was worried about you lot. I wasn't sure what was going on nor how swamped you were."

"Sapnap's group is still fighting, I think," Phil explained and his face became pinched, "George's group decided to use your distraction to go into the outpost."

Wilbur's face darkened once again, "Yeah I saw that message. We didn't even have the chance to exchange information. Those idiots have no idea what they're getting into."

"We'll just catch up to them," Schlatt finished promptly, sounding vaguely upset just as Techno and Dream stopped fighting, glancing to the crowding of pillagers holding up arrows to the group beyond the trees. They still hadn't approached since Techno and Dream arrived.

"I set up more explosions near the outpost," Wilbur informed casually and Dream grinned at the horror that formed in some of the pillagers' faces, "Though I'm not setting them off until I know the others are out."

"You're not destroying all our work!" One of the pillagers finally cried, loosing an arrow that narrowly missed Wilbur's head. Wilbur didn't look disturbed in the least though Phil now looked furious, "We'll gladly die for our mission! Long live the Ender Dragon!"

"I hate dealing with cringe crazy cult-obsessed losers," Techno sighed and Dream let out a startled wheeze, not expecting that response in the moment but agreeing with him instantly, "Bring it then. I'm itching for more blood at the moment anyway."

After a moment of hesitation, the pillagers actually did start attacking. A group of several pillagers charged at them while the archers fired off their arrows. Dream brought up his shield immediately and ducked to the right. Dream could distantly hear the others begin fighting and actually laughed when he caught Schlatt taunting them while evading. He'd never seen the man fight before but he appeared to be holding his own enough.

Dream killed two more pillagers before making his way to the archers. One of the arrows got stuck in his shield and he bashed at the one who shot it with his shield. They go down with a cry and he silenced them with his axe. Rolling his shoulders, he looked up for the next opponent and shouted in alarm when an arrow whizzed past, cutting a big part of his ear. Dream hissed at the sharp burning and blood he felt running down his ear but ignored it in favor of returning the damage to the archer before killing him.

"You won't get away with this," One of the pillagers said and Dream glanced over, surprised to see how many they had already taken out. This one was the only one that remained. Phil had his sword pointed at him.

"We could say the same to you lot," Phil grinned sharply, "You attacked us, kidnapped us, hurt, and *tortured* some of us."

The pillagers paused, "All a means to a better end."

"How is releasing the Ender Dragon a *better* end?" Schlatt questioned incredulously and Dream glanced at him. That sure as hell was the question of the century. All of this pain because a group of crazies loved the Ender Dragon a bit *too* much.

"It was always meant to be. The Ender Dragon will cleanse the overworld of its sin and corruption," The pillager explained and he glared at them. Dream rose an eyebrow in disbelief.

"Yeah, no, I can't listen to this. Time to die!" Wilbur smiled cheerily and Techno actually chuckled. The pillager looked horrified before their face twisted into rage.

"Even *if* you kill me it won't change anything. There is still many more..." The pillager paused and Dream walked closer so that he could see his expression better. Wilbur and Phil also paused, staring down at the pillager at their mercy thoughtfully, "You won't get away...not *all* of you."

Something sunk in Dream's stomach and Schlatt's face twisted, "What the fuck do you mean by that?"

"And how did you know the moment we arrived anyway?" Techno added, stalking closer like a predator after his prey. The pillager seemed too satisfied by Schlatt's reaction to even react to Techno arriving.

"The hybrid. We saw him close to the outpost last night," The pillager explained and Dream stiffened in shock, "He was carrying dirt around and we were going to go after him but the Master told us not to; that you'd all come to the outpost this morning. He wanted us to prepare."

They all leaned back in shock and Phil cursed, "Oh fuck....his *ender-walking*-"

Techno still stood frozen but Wilbur looked just as horrified as the rest of them. This "Master" could have easily decided to just come after them late last night if that were the case and kill them then. Sure they had people keeping watch, especially Techno, but they would have been taken by surprise if he had done that. The fact that he didn't was....suspicious.

"And you didn't immediately come after us because....?" Wilbur prompted, looking disgusted when the pillager's smile widened.

"Well we really needed that hybrid and were hoping to catch it in our outpost. We hoped to lure it into the outpost. Getting rid of you all was just a benefit," The pillager crowed, looking gleeful at their faces. Phil's face suddenly morphed into one of rage but all Dream felt was more horror and a frantic type of panic.

Ranboo already *was* in the outpost! With *George*!

Without warning Phil thrust his sword into the pillager's throat and the pillager's eyes went wide as he choked on his own blood. Techno turned and rose an eyebrow at Phil. Phil's face was dark, "We're going inside. *Now*."

Dream still felt torn between his worry for Sapnap and his worry for George's group.

Chapter End Notes

Things are a bit chaotic for the characters! We'll see George's point of view next chapter and also learn what happened with Sapnap! Stay safe out there guys! ☺

And as always, I'd love any feedback that's not hateful!

Chapter 34

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Sorry for such a long hiatus. I've been in a rough pit but I'm feeling more up to writing lately. Hope you are all well and staying safe.

I don't want to bore you with too much talk or anything. The news of Technoblade's death was just one of many things that hit me hard over the past few months. I am still going to be writing Technoblade's character in my stories. His character has a special place in my heart along many of these other Minecraft characters. I do not write his character to diminish him in any way!

Please stay safe and don't be afraid to take breaks for your mental health!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The pillagers' main outpost was oddly structured in George's opinion. While the barbed wire on the outermost gate was an interesting choice, he wasn't impressed with how most of the base focused on the tall tower. The kids weren't much impressed with the base.

"I could definitely build a better evil base," Tubbo claimed while Tommy nodded with a wrinkled expression. George rose an eyebrow at them.

"The tower is kind of intimidating," Ranboo retorted softly and Tubbo looked at him with the most deadpan expression on his face.

"Boo, you get intimidated by someone sneezing," He claimed and George barked out a laugh with Tommy laughing alongside him. Ranboo scowled at Tubbo.

"Can we please focus?" Purpled sighed, obviously exasperated from his hiding spot. George shifted guiltily as he returned his gaze to the base, "I'm a bit weirded out by how little people are outside than I was expecting."

"And there's not many people guarding the base outside," George noted as Purpled nodded along.

"Pretty stupid, innit?" Tommy scoffed as he squinted his eyes, "Their shit sucks. Iron armor and swords?"

"Better than stone," Tubbo replied cheerfully, ignoring the look Tommy shot him, "But it *is* weird since they supposedly know we're coming."

Something unpleasant curled in George's stomach and he glanced at the communicator he was given. There were no new messages. That didn't feel any more comforting than if there *were* some.

He shook it off and tried to clear away his worry for Dream and Sapnap. They could take care of themselves, the kids with him had less experience. George glanced at Purpled, well *most* of them had less experience...

Purpled spoke up, not noticing George staring at him, "Even if it's not as good as we expected, they still seem to be gathering a lot of weapons."

"And they're training," Tommy added easily, "So they *are* preparing for us at least."

"They'd be stupid not to," George muttered, turning his eyes back on the base.

"The tower is probably where they keep their goods and probably their captives too," Ranboo said quietly and George frowned at the reminder that there will most likely be new captives.

"Speaking of the tower, there's a purple glow at the top, see?" Tubbo commented as he gestured to the top. George followed his gaze and blinked, surprised that he hadn't noticed it before, "Could that be from a nether portal?"

"I'd think so, considering they had a base in the nether," Ranboo answered easily, his brows furrowed, "Who's to say they don't have more there?"

George frowned again. Sapnap had the most experience with the pillager's nether base and he never mentioned there being more than one. It's still possible though.

After a couple more minutes of silence Tommy spoke up warily, "I still don't like the fact that they aren't leaving their base to, like, patrol the area. Think they have traps inside for us?"

George tensed, caught off guard by the idea as it had not occurred to him until then; by the way Purpled and Tubbo stiffened, it seems it surprised them as well.

"They could," Purpled answered, scowling, "We'd have to be careful inside the tower regardless."

A moment later George straightened when a group came walking out of the tower and eventually out of their view. He was able to make out that the man leading the group had some diamond armor on. No one else seemed to have diamond gear so George thought that was significant enough to mean that the man was probably a leader of the base if not the only one.

The kids agreed with him and Tommy was increasingly irritated that they couldn't see more of the man from their angle. George tuned out his complaining and looked around the base once more. He'd already marked the two exits he saw but cringed when he realized that the main tower appeared to have only one entrance and exit, excluding the few windows he saw.

It'd be impossible to get in and out without a fight, it seemed, and George wasn't sure the others would still be all for the kids' idea of getting any prisoners out themselves when they found this out.

".....and I'm still fucking weirded out by how they don't have people patrolling out!" Tommy exclaimed when George tuned back into their conversation, "Something doesn't feel right! What the fuck is up with them!?"

"I agree but maybe the others have more observations that'll help us figure out where to go from here," Purpled stated, his expression calm, "No use freaking out about it, Tommy."

"M not freaking out..." Tommy muttered angrily, crossing his arms, "Just *weirded* out. This place gives me bad vibes, ya know?"

"I think so too," Tubbo nodded, staring intensely down at the base below, "I don't know whether to think they're not smart or that there's something we're missing. It feels like they're not even bothered by a possible attack happening to them...They have to know how many strong people we have with us."

Ranboo twisted his fingers nervously, his eyes flicking to George, "Should we go back now?"

"Maybe soon," George reassured, glancing down at the communicator again. Still nothing. It'd been quite a few minutes since they started observing the base as per the plan but Tommy's words were starting to make George freak out himself.

Tubbo suddenly gasped, making George jump and turn around to see what he was staring at. George's breath hitched when he saw numerous men run out one of the exits, fully armed. Suddenly it was like everyone in the fortress was in frantic motion.

The communicator vibrated and pinged in his hands a few moments later, solidifying the horrified feeling building in George's gut. The kids looked at him wide-eyed and he nearly dropped the device with shaking fingers trying to get a look at the screen.

Philza: There was a ambush waiting for us in the forest. We've been caught and have to fight. Be cautious!

Sapnap: Don't know how but we've been caught! They took us by surprise!

"George?" Ranboo whispered, wringing his hands together nervously.

"What is it?" Tommy asked roughly, his expression already angry like he knew what George was going to say.

"The others have been caught in an ambush. They're fighting," George breathed, waves of fear overtaking him for a moment. The kids all looked alarmed and then Tommy snarled.

"How did they know?! We haven't even seen anyone in the forest!" Tommy exclaimed, his hands curling into fists. Purpled got out a sword unprompted and warily glanced around them.

George couldn't take any chances with the kids' safety, "We should head back and try to find Sapnap's group. They're the closest."

"But what about the prisoners?" Tubbo asked, frowning, his expression conflicted. George frowned as well, a pang in his chest as he suddenly remembered Sapnap and his experience.

"We won't abandon them but it's not a good idea to go in by ourselves right now. This was supposed to just be a information gathering mission anyways," He explained and Tubbo exchanged a look with Tommy.

"S-So we're gonna go help the others fight?" Ranboo questioned, looking nauseous at the idea of fighting. George kind of understood that feeling.

"Well we can't just sit around," Purpled replied, almost sassy with the words. Tommy rolled his eyes.

"There might be more groups out here so watch out," George warned, already feeling a headache coming on with how stressed he felt, "I don't know how they slipped past the others to surprise them but hopefully there aren't anymore out there waiting to ambush us."

Tommy scoffed, still frowning angrily but stood when George did. Purpled and Ranboo soon followed with Tubbo reluctantly standing as well. George brought out his bow, glancing around to check their surroundings before moving on.

George mentally mapped out where Sapnap's group should be and how far they were. Sapnap shouldn't be too far away and George would definitely breathe easier at seeing his friend okay.

His hands wrapped tightly around the bow he held to the point that his fingers were hurting, but that at least kept them from shaking too much. It was as he thought about preventative measures should someone get really hurt while fighting that Purpled shouted wordlessly in warning.

George jolted so hard that he dropped his bow and fumbled in grabbing it again before it hit the ground. A few men were stepping into view, shouting words at each other and George was already going numb with fear that he couldn't focus on what they were saying.

His hearing tuned back in when they started slowly advancing on him and the kids and Tommy was shouting back at them, "-fucking try me bitches! I'll fucking *kill* you!"

Tubbo was already aiming his own loaded crossbow at the group, Purpled was eerily blank as he got into a defensive position, and Ranboo was somewhere behind them both, looking pale with fear of his own.

It was his expression that made George jump into action. He snarled wordlessly and armed his bow with an arrow. The men slowed to a stop before them and George growled, "Stay back! Take another step forward and I'll kill you where you stand!"

One of the pillager's quirked an eyebrow, "At most you could take out one of us before we swarm and kill you."

"Fucking try us!" Tommy roared, taking a step forward with his sword in hand. George felt his heart hammer against his ribcage. He didn't know what to do but all he felt was the fear of something happening to the kids and him being helpless to do anything.

"You're stupid if you underestimate us," Purpled commented in a tone that sounded way too casual for the situation. George wished *he* could be like that.

"And what could four kids and a twig-like man do?" Another pillager in the group taunted with laughter in his tone. George counted seven men in the group. Given what the kids could do, George felt a bit better at those odds. Only a bit.

"How did you even know we were here?" Tubbo asked before Tommy had the chance to blow up in anger again.

The pillagers all exchanged looks or grins. George nearly shuddered. One of them even stared past George but he wasn't risking a glance to see what he was staring at. Ranboo made a nervous sound.

"It doesn't matter anymore," Another pillager commented, "You lost."

"Let's just kill them. Boss says to not leave a single one alive other than the hybrid," The quietest pillager spoke up and George stiffened as Ranboo gasped.

"Good luck with that," Tommy scoffed, but George noticed that he had shifted into a stance of his

own.

None of that mattered because the pillagers began to advance further. George let his arrow loose at the closest pillager and, like he promised, the pillager fell to the ground, bleeding out from the arrow in his neck.

The pillagers immediately rounded on him but Tommy surprised George by flying forward into the fray with absolutely no hesitation, just complete recklessness that seemed to actually work in his favor.

By the time Purpled joined him, Tommy had already killed one pillager and George's heart jumped in his throat. He was surprised how quickly Tommy went for the kill. Had he killed before?

George stopped a pillager that got around Purpled, not allowing him to get near Tubbo or Ranboo behind him. He put his training to good use, blocking a blow from the pillager and pushing him back. George used one of his arrows and, instead of taking the time to shoot it, stabbed the pillager in the eye with it.

Just to be sure he didn't get back up to hurt any of them, George jammed it further in and pushed the pillager to the ground. Purpled gasped and George jumped up instantly, seeing a cut on the kid's upper arm, by his shoulder.

A cross-bolt launched itself into the shoulder of the pillager fighting Purpled and the purple-clad teen was able to push the pillager away for the finishing blow. George glanced at Tubbo, who had made the shot, in surprise. Tubbo was frowning but he didn't seem bothered. George had to hand it to these kids. They were strong and had more willpower than most of the adults at this point.

"T-That's all of them?" Ranboo asked, looking around almost frantically. George peered at Tommy and the boy was thankfully unharmed but breathing heavily.

"Yeah," He answered and turned to George, "I didn't really expect you to stab that fucker right in the eye with an arrow."

"It was badass!" Tubbo cheered but Ranboo looked nauseous and Tubbo nudged him, "We're alright, Boo, calm down."

"S-Sorry I wasn't much help," Ranboo looked down shamefully and George felt a pang in his chest, "I know *how* to fight but...."

"As long as you can defend yourself it's okay," George said softly and Ranboo nodded, something relieved in his eyes.

"You're missing out on the fun though," Tommy commented with a grin, "I told those fuckers to try me and I'd kill 'em."

"Yeah, you sure showed them," Purpled rolled his eyes and winced at his arm, "That one guy fought dirty."

"You good?" Tubbo asked with a frown. Purpled nodded.

"Let me bandage that real quick," George commented and Purpled scowled but said nothing as George quickly walked over. He cleaned the wound as quickly as he could and wrapped a single bandage on it, "This is mainly to keep it as clean as possible."

"It's all good. We need to get going," Purpled sighed, fiddling with the bandage, "Any updates?"

George's eyes widened. He'd forgotten about the communicator in all that disaster. He pulled it out and scanned it over but there were no new messages. A knot formed in George's gut, "No."

"We should probably message them to make sure they're okay," Ranboo fretted, "Also we haven't told them what happened with us either."

"Boob boy's right," Tommy nodded seriously and didn't bat an eye at the glare Ranboo threw his way.

George's fingers still shook slightly as he typed out the beginning of a message. He was right in the middle of it when a distractingly loud boom nearly sent them all to the ground. George dropped the communicator as he stumbled a step back in shock.

"What the fuck?!" Tommy cursed, his own eyes wide.

"Wilbur must have set off an explosion," Tubbo said with a stunned expression.

"He wasn't supposed to do that until after everything was over!" George replied hysterically, feeling panic clog his throat yet again.

"What should we do?!" Ranboo gasped, fidgeting frantically.

"They're fighting so let's assume Wilbur is using the explosion as a tactic of some sorts," Purpled hummed, still sounding so damn calm it was almost annoying at this point. Wasn't he supposed to be a goddamn *kid*?!

"They're all going to be gunning for his location," Tubbo spoke softly but his eyes lit up in realization. The expression on Tommy's face twitched.

"Wilbur can handle his own," Tommy responded seriously but that was not at all what George was expecting the boy to say, "Especially if he has explosives. Plus Phil's with him."

"True," Tubbo nodded looking much more relieved by that fact alone. George has never seen Philza fight but this made him want to. Kind of.

"We should go back to the base," Tommy said suddenly, turning to face George who blinked in shock.

"Wait what?!" Ranboo cried out, stunned. Purpled stared at Tommy blankly, studying him. Tubbo seemed surprised but also not at the same time; a perk from knowing Tommy so well.

"You want us to use this as a chance to go help the prisoners," Tubbo realized and Tommy grinned at him.

"Yeah, most of the assholes will be gunning for the others so why not?"

George felt nearly lightheaded from all the emotions running through him and Purpled just laughed, "You know, that's actually smart. We'd still have to wary of pillagers that could be inside. Not all of them will have gone out."

"Yeah, but *most* will," Tommy grinned toothily, "Let's do it!"

George realized that there was no talking him out of it. It's not like George couldn't see the merits of the plan. The pillagers probably didn't think they would have brought explosives with them so they might be caught off guard and gunning for their friends.

"Fine," George sighed, rubbing his temples when Tommy and Tubbo both cheered, "I'm letting the others know though. We can't just do this without them knowing."

"Whatever," Tommy replied but his eyebrow twitched.

"Gonna give Dadza a heart attack," Tubbo said cheerfully, nudging Tommy and George snorted out a surprised laugh. *Dadza?*

He shook his head and dived for his communicator, quickly typing a message for the others before looking at the kids seriously, "One rule though, if I say it's too dangerous we're turning back."

"What! We-"

George interrupted Tommy with a glare, "We're not going to abandoned any prisoners here, but it's not worth your *lives* Tommy. It's not worth gambling our safety for, alright?"

Something went through Tommy's expression then and his eyes briefly flicked to Tubbo before he sighed, "Alright...."

"Then let's do this!" Tubbo beamed, his hands tightening on his crossbow as Ranboo's lips fell into a straight line, tail lashing behind him.

"Yay....." Purpled cheered sarcastically and Tommy huffed.

Thankfully they make it back to the base without anymore ambushes, even if they hadn't gone far from it in the first place. George felt paranoid that they'd be taken by surprise at any moment. He couldn't get the knot in his gut to unwind.

He did breathe a little easier when they all noticed the lack of people in the base compared to before. There were practically none near the tower. Tubbo grinned, "So how are we doing this? Going to sneak in all at once or one at a time?"

"I don't want to do one at a time," George immediately said, his eyes going to each of them, "We still don't know what it's going to be like on the inside and I'd rather be safe than sorry."

Tubbo shrugged and Purpled hummed, "Well our window of opportunity is only so long here, let's just get going."

"Follow me," George sighed as he turned and began to make his way down the small hill that led to the cobblestone wall surrounding the pillager base.

Sneaking over the wall was actually easier than George thought after they found a weak spot in the barbed wire surrounding it. Climbing the cobblestone only took a little effort and he was immediately studying the surroundings with a pounding heart as the others made it over.

They were on the side of the large tower and George took a steadying breathe as he walked alongside the side of the wall and glanced around the edge to see the front entrance.

There were still not many people near the tower and there was no one guarding the entrance, which worried George. If they had captives that were important somehow, why wouldn't there be guards? George's frown deepened.

"How about I go through the entrance first?" Purpled offered and George turned his frown on him.

Purpled just grinned, "I'm good at sneaking around and fighting my way out of just about anything. I can sneak through and give a signal for all clear."

"I'm down with it," Tommy shrugged, "Purpled's been on more missions than anyone here."

"I expected you to protest more but you're being surprisingly logical lately," Tubbo said in surprise as he turned to Tommy. Tommy looked offended.

"I'll agree only on the condition that we burst in after you if you don't show within five minutes," George interrupted before Tommy could get too loud. Purpled nodded, flashing another dangerous grin before he snuck off. George couldn't even hear his footsteps now that he was focusing on it.

They gathered around the corner and watched Purpled quickly sneak to the door, open it slightly, and sink through without making any noise at all. George was impressed and made a mental reminder not to underestimate Purpled just because he was young.

George barely had any time to panic over his brief disappearance before Purpled was poking his head out of the door and waving a hand to them. George breathed a sigh of relief.

"Let's fucking do this," Tommy grinned toothily and jumped forward. George quickly scrambled to follow the energetic boy with Ranboo trailing hesitantly behind him and Tubbo.

George glanced at the few people close to the tower but none looked their way in time to catch them slipping through the doors. He felt a bit of the nerves loosen once they were all inside.

It was darker than he expected, the only light coming from scattered lanterns. There were not as many rooms as George expected to see, only a couple here and there. A staircase led downwards on one side of the long hall in front of them.

The dimly lit hallway showed no one strolling about and George found this odd. Did everyone abandon the building to go after the others? It just didn't seem likely that *everyone* left.

"Downstairs?" Tubbo whispered and George glanced at the kids, thankful that they seemed to be taking this all seriously. Tommy and Purpled glanced around at all the doors like George had. Ranboo simply stared at the stairs leading down with furrowed brows.

"That's probably where they'd keep prisoners," Ranboo nodded, speaking just as quietly.

"I'll go first. Keep your guards up," George muttered, ignoring the look Purpled gave him. It didn't matter if Purpled was more experienced than George. He wasn't taking any more risks than he needed to.

Thankfully Purpled didn't argue with him even though it seemed like he wanted to. Tommy was suspiciously quiet but followed closely by Tubbo's side as they all slowly descended the stairs.

The downstairs was just as dimly lit and made up of stone all around. George scowled, only seeing a few doors but nothing that looked like cells. His heart skipped a beat when his eyes caught on another staircase leading further down.

Ranboo immediately stuttered through a sentence, "D-Do we really wanna g-go further down?"

"Don't be a pussy, Ranboo," Tommy scoffed and Tubbo smacked his arm lightly, scolding, "What? He is!"

"Quiet," Purpled hissed at him and Tommy glared, "It's not ideal, obviously, but unless we want to take more time checking every one of these rooms..."

George wasn't sure what to do. It's possible one of those rooms held prisoners but it's more likely they're held further down. That only made rescuing and escaping incredibly difficult.

"Let's quickly go down, just to see," George spoke quickly, clarifying after, "We don't want to be caught down there, so if we don't see anything we're coming back up."

"Fine by me," Purpled shrugged but Tubbo's mouth tightened.

"As long as we actually look for the prisoners..." He muttered and Tommy put a hand on his arm.

"We aren't leaving anyone behind Tubso," He grinned and Tubbo smiled at him, though it looked a little weak.

"Let's just hurry. This place freaks me out," Ranboo complained quietly, rubbing at his own arms. George nodded in agreement and immediately led them to the stairs.

He descended slowly, his heart hammering and his grip on his bow so tight it was hurting his fingers. He had an arrow ready all this time but what if he still wasn't fast enough should something happen? George swallowed heavily.

This new hallway was also mostly stone and even more dimly lit due to the lack of lanterns. George's heart stopped when he quiet movement of chains and muttering. The walls on both sides were made up of iron bars and the familiar sight caused a heat of panic for a moment; it was like he was back in that room in the nether.

-trapped.....he was trapped and hot and there was no way out of this room-

"Oh gods, they're actually here," Ranboo gasped, startling George out of his panicked daze. His heart hammered against his ribcage violently as he looked around again.

"There's another staircase leading back up on the other side," Tubbo commented, sounding relieved, "Maybe another way to climb out that way?"

"Possibly," Purpled said, his tone sounding a bit lighter as well. George took a steadying breath to manage his earlier panic, "Let's hurry and break these people loose."

"Make sure they don't make too much noise," Tommy replied quickly, that seriousness coming back to them as the kids all moved at once. George jumped into action behind them quietly.

A heavy feeling settled over him as they silently but urgently picked the locks of the doors, whispering reassurances to the prisoners that were chained to the walls by their ankles. Thankfully, George didn't see any children and not many women amongst the prisoners. There also weren't very many in general. He counted nine prisoners total.

Just as George helped Purpled break the last one out, there was a loud but muffled noise above them. They both froze and the prisoners began to panic.

"Shhh, it'll be okay. We're getting out of here," Tubbo murmured desperately, but his own eyes were wide with panic.

The sounds were steadily getting closer and George realized it was definitely the sound of footsteps, multiple ones. George froze for a single moment. There were pillagers here. Were they caught? What was happening outside?

George realized that he hadn't even glanced at his communicator this whole time and his face burned with shame. There was no time. He had to make sure the kids and the prisoners got out safe.

"Purpled, lead the prisoners to the staircase and try to find the nearest exit, even if it's a window," George ordered and Purpled jumped, his eyes widening before darkening in understanding as he nodded. George turned to Tommy, "Go with him Tommy just in case someone finds you and tries to attack."

"What about Tubbo?" He demanded, as if he wasn't going to leave without the other blonde. George didn't doubt it.

"He and Ranboo are going to be following behind the group of prisoners," George replied easily

and Ranboo shot him a worried look.
"And you?"

"I'll stay behind for just a moment," He said and all the kids immediately started whisper-shouting at him. He held up a hand, his face stony, "It's just until I see you guys make it up safely, then I'll follow."

The prisoners looked between them all, shaky but silent. Some were even crying. George smiled sympathetically, "We're getting you out of here. Don't worry. Fight back if you need to. We aren't leaving you behind."

Some of their eyes widened but that seemed to lift their spirits a bit. George sent a look to Purpled as the sounds of footsteps got louder and Purpled jumped into action.

"Follow us!" He whispered harshly, immediately heading for the stairs on the other side. Tommy rushed after him and George nodded to Tubbo and Ranboo once the group was going up the stairs.

The pair hesitated but walked away. George watched them go and once he saw out of sight he breathed easier. The sound of footsteps got louder and then it sounded like they were rushing.

Fear slammed into him and he turned to run after the kids. He was up four of the steps when he heard shouting nearby and realized he must have been seen. Fuck! He pushed himself to go faster and caught up with Ranboo and Tubbo.

"Oh thank god," Ranboo sighed in relief.

"No time. They saw me," George hissed and noticed Purpled was ushering the prisoners out the closest window, quiet literally holding a whole curtain so that they could use it to climb down until they could jump to the ground. Tommy was also holding the curtain to help support the weight.

They were in some sort of hallway. It wasn't lit very well and that window was one of two windows in sight. Fantastic. They didn't have enough time to get everyone out. Maybe *just* the prisoners. Tommy gritted his teeth, "Hurry up!"

"Tommy don't be mean," Tubbo scolded as the prisoners hurried into action with panicked motions. He had a crossbow aimed behind George.

"We're gonna have to fight again aren't we?" Ranboo asked and George was surprised by the lack of nerves in his voice this time around, just dull acceptance. It made George's chest hurt.

"Yes, get ready. Purpled, Tommy, get the prisoners out first then get ready as well," George said seriously as they looked at him incredulously, "Our first priority is getting the prisoners outside of

here at least. I won't let the pillagers past me, don't worry."

"Or me!" Tubbo said cheerfully and George smiled but it felt shaky. He was trying to appear confident but it was probably obvious that he knew he couldn't take on a whole group by himself.

The shouting got closer and George stiffened, aiming his bow to shoot immediately. He forced his arms not to tremble from the nerves as he heard Purpled and Tommy usher the prisoners to hurry again.

"We can do this," Tubbo grinned though there was a shakiness to his words that betrayed him, "We're all *really* good fighters and good at getting out of sticky situations. They're just iron-wearing pillager cowards!"

"That's right!" Tommy hollered with a growing grin on his own face, nearly pushing the prisoner that was halfway out the window. Purpled sent a glare at him.

George kept his eyes on the darkness surrounding the stairs below and felt that similar spike of fear when the first few pillagers showed themselves, weapons in hand and aggression on their faces. Tubbo was right, most of them only had iron gear and not even full pieces of armor at that, compared to them.

Then his stomach fell to his feet when a large pillager came up in the middle, wearing diamond armor and wielding a large diamond sword.

Sapnap was furious. He knew he shouldn't have been surprised by such an ambush, but seriously? How did the pillagers even know they were here yet? They'd made sure they hadn't been detected. What changed?

At least the pillagers weren't much match for them. This was evident when Sapnap killed the final pillager that dared to try and stab him through the back while he was busy fighting some other loser.

"You guys good?" Puffy asked, huffing a bit. She looked just a tad bit roughed up. There was a cut on her back. Skeppy was breathing heavily next to her. Sapnap felt a twinge in his chest at the sight of blood on his sleeves from numerous cuts on his arms.

"Yeah, but jeez Skeppy, you good?" Sapnap answered, his eyes narrowing worriedly at Skeppy. Said man only shrugged, grinning.

"Kinda only used to fighting mobs, man," He replied, glancing down at his arms, "They kept getting around my shield."

Sapnap glanced at his communicator, frowning. He needed to get to George. With all this going down, Dream would be heading for George's group immediately.

Puffy seemed to be thinking the same, "Let's try and meet up with where George's group should be. I'm worried about the kids."

"Yeah no joke," Skeppy ground out, hissing as he touched one of his injuries, "I feel like something's not right. We're missing something. How did they even know we were here?"

"We'll figure that out some other time. I'm more worried about those explosions we heard," Sapnap scowled, "Wilbur wouldn't have done that without a really good reason."

"True," Puffy commented, looking more worried, "Let's go, but watch out for more ambushes."

Sapnap glanced at his communicator, which showed no more new messages and felt his heart sink. Something seemed really wrong somehow and if he lost Dream or George.....he'd completely lose it.

Chapter End Notes

Originally I planned to have a much bigger part for Sapnap in this chapter but this chapter was getting too long so you'll see more of Sapnap and the others in the next chapter.

Please stay safe and don't be afraid to take breaks for your mental health!

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